



DOWNLAND THYMES

NEWS FOR THE SOUTH DOWNS VOLUNTEER
RANGER SERVICE ISSUE 75 | SPRING 2017



A SPECIAL SPOT

NEVILL BROOKE TELLS US ABOUT HIS SPECIAL SPOT IN THE NATIONAL PARK...

"I've actually got two special places, to which I often take visitors when they want to see the South Downs. One is the sea cliffs at Seven Sisters and the other is Old Winchester Hill. I enjoy history and I like photographing landscapes, so both sites offer a wealth of history as well as lovely views. For example, at Old Winchester Hill, the past has had an obvious impact on the landscape, from Bronze Age barrows and the Iron Age hillfort to World War II."

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE EFFECT THESE PLACES HAVE UPON YOU?

"I love their calming influence, they offer a sense of tranquility regardless of when you go. I find myself thinking about what they must have looked

like at key points in time. It gives me a sense of awe when I look around both these sites."

HAS YOUR VOLUNTEERING INVOLVEMENT INFLUENCED YOUR CHOICE OF LOCATIONS?

"Yes, I'm more aware of the habitats such as the chalk grassland from being a volunteer – and in turn I now photograph its flora as well as the Downs."

DOES YOUR SPECIAL SPOT EPITOMISE SOMETHING ABOUT THE NATIONAL PARK?

"The views are stunning at both locations, at Seven Sisters the effect of light and clouds on the cliffs can be dramatic when you stand at Seaford Head, I only wish I could be a better

photographer to capture all the changing moods. Both here and at Old Winchester Hill you can go on lovely walks around the location and superb views unfold in front of you. Coastal and seaward at one side, while at the other a rolling landscape of hills and valleys with the Isle of Wight just visible in the haze. To me these two sites epitomise English countryside at its very best, and you can see that the very landscape has been shaped by its history."

NEVILL BROOKE, VRS CHAIRMAN

Main: Seven Sisters Cliffs
Inset: Old Winchester Hill
© Nevill Brooke

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TAKE THE LEAD



CHAIRMAN’S CORNER

As this is my last article as VRS Chairman, it might be interesting to look back over the main work undertaken by the VRS Committee in the last three years. Inevitably there will be ups and downs!

First on a positive note. The committee ran and funded many different highly rated ecology courses with an estimated 300 places filled by volunteers during this period. It installed two water taps and troughs in Hampshire, as well as contributing to two interpretation panels, on the South Downs Way. The committee also spent a considerable amount of time working with the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) staff on the production of the VRS volunteering leaflets, area banners, new clothing and the development of the volunteer’s section on the SDNPA Intranet. It helped fund some of the Midhurst Pond Project utilising, for the first time, the VRS Conservation Reserve – there are plans to tap this reserve again in early 2017. In addition, it supported numerous SDNPA meetings and events which hopefully helped raise our profile.

The areas where I feel we did not make as much progress as I would have liked was the lack of take-up of both the VRS Conservation Reserve and Travel Fellowship Fund, plus the inability to advance as far as we had expected, due to external factors beyond our control, with the South Downs Way water taps project.

Finally, my appreciation to all those SDNPA staff who have worked with us, as well as the members of the VRS Committee, for their invaluable support and commitment over this time. In particular, thanks to Tony Mobbs and his Review Group for their valuable work in reassessing the VRS Committee’s role – I wish my successor and the new committee members all the best.

Hope to see you at the VRS AGM on Saturday 25 March.

NEVILL BROOKE, VRS CHAIRMAN

UPDATE FROM THE VOLUNTEERING TEAM



IN THE LAST ISSUE I INTRODUCED THE VOLUNTEER DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR THE NATIONAL PARK THAT WE ARE WORKING ON.

This is looking not only at how the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) can work directly with volunteers in new ways, but also how SDNPA can support other organisations in their work with volunteers.

We want to build a network of groups that can help each other, share resources and skills and generally make better use of limited funds. We are holding two volunteer ‘networking’ events over the next few weeks, one in Midhurst, the other in Lewes, to gather together people from a range of organisations and groups to talk about things we/they might do together. Internally we’ve already had meetings with three out of four of the Area teams and have some interesting ideas to work on.

Some of our new Assistant Rangers have now started in their new roles – see page 10 for details of who they are. However, the promotion of Laura Deane in the Western Downs and the departure of Sam Buckland from the Central Downs to a new job with RSPB, means those teams are still not up to full strength and there will be another round of recruitment shortly. This means that the changes in responsibility, for things like volunteer clothing and some aspects of training, will not take place at the same time everywhere. Matt and Tim in the Eastern Downs have already agreed to take on most of the work around getting replacement clothing for Seven Sisters and Stanmer based Volunteer Rangers; we are talking to the other Areas about when that can happen for them.

Right: Eastern Downs Christmas task on Beddingham Hill

© SDNPA



© SDNPA

© SDNPA



A QUICK NOTE FROM THE EDITOR...

To welcome in the New Year we are making a couple of small changes to Downland Thymes. You’ll notice a couple of new articles in this edition...

A Special Spot will be a rolling feature which will see someone from the National Park give an insight to one of their favourite places in the South Downs, however big or small. For the first one we interviewed outgoing VRS Chairman Nevill Brook, who in fact gave us two special spots – see the front cover article.

Secondly we are including a fun and interesting facts section titled “Did you know...?” – so if you have any informative, or even silly, facts about the South Downs National Park or places within it please let us know.

What makes Downland Thymes such a special and successful publication is that it is written by volunteers for volunteers. However this does mean we are reliant on volunteers supplying us with articles for each edition. So, if you think you might be able to help out by writing an article about a certain task, or an interesting story, please email us at dt@southdowns.gov.uk now.

We hope you enjoy the first Downland Thymes of 2017!

REBECCA SAUNDERS,
COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER



Fulking Escarpment © Sam Moore

TWO INSPIRATIONAL VOLUNTEER RANGERS:

WE THOUGHT WE’D SHARE THIS THOUGHTFUL LETTER FROM ONE OF YOUR FELLOW VOLUNTEER RANGERS...

Dear Editorial Team,

This is just a short note to say thanks for another great issue of Downland Thymes and how much I particularly enjoyed reading two of the articles that were in Issue 74. The first was written by a new Volunteer Ranger Sam Rush who had been through a traumatic event and explained that by volunteering it had helped her to regain some of the confidence she had lost along the way. Sam explained how she appreciates the varied work on task days and enjoys the great atmosphere and support of the group.

The second was about Chris Pomfrey, who has been a Volunteer Ranger for almost 20 years. In 2014 Chris had a stroke that left him with lost memory and speech, as well as weakening his right hand and leg. In the article he explained how two years on, he has come back to the Volunteer Rangers and how much he enjoys being back with the Wednesday Group at Stanmer.

I have known Chris since he started and I am very glad he is back. In the old days he used to be out every Wednesday and also represented the mid-week Stanmer VRs on the VRS Committee. It was great to read the support he has been given by his friends from the Wednesday group and staff.

I thought both of the articles were inspirational and demonstrate how good it is to be just two of the cogs in the great time-pie that is the South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service.

CRIS SAVILL,
VOLUNTEER RANGER
– CENTRAL DOWNS



Right: Volunteers fencing Amberley dewpond © SDNPA

Below: Volunteers Hedgelaying at Kingston © Nick Robinson



THE HIDDEN WORLD OF SOUTH DOWNS SPIDERS

Main: *Enoplognatha ovata*
Inset: *Salticus scenicus*
© Roger Kiernan



SINCE BECOMING A VOLUNTEER RANGER I HAVE BECOME MUCH MORE INTERESTED IN ECOLOGY AND HAVE TAKEN A SPECIFIC INTEREST IN SPIDERS. BASED ON RESEARCH IT IS REASONABLE TO ASSUME THAT THERE ARE 30 SPIDERS PER SQ. M IN THE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK WHICH COVERS AN AREA 1627 SQ. KM.

This suggests it is the home of at least 50 billion spiders (yes billion!). If you suffer from arachnophobia this is not good news but is it good news for the National Park?

The answer is an unreserved yes. Spiders are not vegetarians. They do not destroy the flora but are extremely resourceful predators. They are the tiny equivalent of tigers, hunting and killing a large variety of unwanted pests and, unfortunately, the occasional bee and butterfly. Research¹ shows UK spiders consume an average of 80kg per hectare of insects a year so spiders in the South Downs kill about 13million kg of insects per year which translates into about 250g per visitor per year. The insect population in the South Downs would explode without spiders so they have an important and positive impact for both visitors and the landscape.

So how do spiders catch all these insects? Spiders evolved over a period of 300+

million years so they have had plenty of time to develop ingenious ways of catching different prey in a range of habitats. Silk webs in which prey becomes entangled are the most noticeable. Different species use other techniques. Spitting spiders spit at their prey and tie them up in silk. Jumping spiders jump on their prey. Wolf spiders chase or ambush their prey. Others can change their colour to match a flower so they can capture unaware insects when they alight and trapdoor spiders weave a web over a hole and burst through to capture passing insects. These are just a few of many examples.

Interestingly, although spiders are carnivores they cannot eat solid food. They kill their prey by sinking their fangs into it and injecting venom. They then turn the insides of the prey into a protein shake by vomiting digestive fluid over it then sucking out their insides.

Over 600 species of spiders have been recorded in the UK and the Downs is home to many of them. The beauty and intricacy of spiders never ceases to amaze me and with patience, observation and a camera with a close-up lens you can develop a fascinating hobby.

There is no case for being frightened of spiders. No aggressive or dangerous spiders are native to the UK. Half a dozen species have fangs that can penetrate human skin when they feel threatened and cannot escape. Should you be that rare individual unlucky enough to be bitten you may feel some slight discomfort and at the very worse it would be like a bee sting.

In summary, spiders are bad for insects but good for you and good for the National Park so let's learn to love them!

ROGER KIERNAN, EASTERN DOWNS VOLUNTEER RANGER

¹ Ecological impact of spider predation: a critical assessment of Bristowe's and Turnbull's estimates-Martin Nyffeler
Bull. Br. Arachnol Soc.(2000) 11 (9), 367-373

A NATURE RESERVE IS BORN

AT THE NORTHERN END OF THE MEON VALLEY TRAIL LIES THE REMAINS OF THE OLD WEST MEON STATION. BUT IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE RAILWAY TRAINS STEAMED THIS WAY. NOW IN 2017 A NEW FUTURE LOOKS LIKELY, FOR PART OF THIS SITE WILL SOON BE TURNED INTO A NATURE RESERVE FOR CHILDREN.



Nature reserve is on the right behind the trees © Russell Cleaver



Clearing a path © Russell Cleaver

This project began in the local community where the local primary school, housed in a Victorian building surrounded by tarmac, asked that it be allowed access to the derelict station site as this had green spaces that were unused and neglected.

To cut a long story short, Hampshire County Council (HCC), the landowner, and the SDNPA supported the idea, once safe access to children could be guaranteed, so a project was born to enable an old siding to be turned into a nature reserve.

Firstly funds had to be raised but with a Sustainable Communities Fund and volunteers to help, the project soon had the means to get underway.

Which is why, during this February, the Western Area VRS sallied forth, accompanied by HCC rangers on a digger to begin the project. Firstly, we had to clear the site and make it safe – this took three separate task days of hard graft. Volunteers wielding chainsaws and brush-cutters cut out the scrub while the digger levelled old tips and graded the surrounds. A huge fire was needed to burn much of the debris, and volunteers had to be at their most creative to recycle concrete slabs, stone and old stumps and convert them into wildlife habitats.

We found it a fascinating task; a blend of destruction evolving into creation as haphazard scrub was converted into a mosaic of habitats. We made a winding path between the habitats and this will soon become a nature trail.

By the time you read this, a local contractor will have fenced around the site and a pedestrian gate will have been erected. Meanwhile the school children are being involved too, as they are currently designing features to incorporate on site, which we, the VRS, will later help install. For we are programmed to return on further task days this summer to establish the nature trail and help finish the project.

It is rare and very satisfying for volunteers to be involved in a school's project, especially from its early creation right through to completion in a single year – but if all goes well we shall do so here; even to seeing the primary school children visiting their new nature reserve in the coming autumn term.

So, watch this space for an update near the end of 2017.

RUSSELL CLEAVER,
WESTERN DOWNS VOLUNTEER RANGER



Research at the Records Office
© Malcolm Walford



Feeding the fire on the hangers
© Malcolm Walford

FROM DESK TO DOWNLAND

HOW DID I FIND MYSELF, IN 2016, WORKING ON A HILLSIDE FEEDING A BONFIRE ON A SUMMER'S DAY IN LOVELY SURROUNDINGS?

Back in August 2014 I was working in the West Sussex Record Office, when I looked up at the notice board and saw an advert for volunteers to take part in the Secrets of the High Wood project. I had lived most of my life within sight of the western South Downs; it had been my playground, a place I took my children, an area where I led walks and I was sufficiently curious about the project to sign up.

I chose to research the West Dean and Singleton area and came up with three topics for an article in the recent book *Secrets of the High Woods – Revealing hidden landscapes* supported by the South Downs National Park Authority.

While taking part in the project, I discovered that I was able to take part in field trips, guided by trained archaeologists, who were investigating anomalies shown on LIDAR* pictures and learned more about the past history of the Downs.

Back at the Record Office in Chichester I saw a notice about an induction course for South Downs National Park volunteers (I apparently qualified as one) and duly turned up at Midhurst where Laura Deane explained the work of the volunteer rangers. I was looking to do something different, learn new skills and give back something to an area where I had spent so much of my free time. I was also keen to help increase the biodiversity in my local area so I signed up, enjoyed my taster day on Chalton Down, and started with the Monday VRS team in January last year – they are a sociable crowd and I work with them in various locations and on differing tasks and have never regretted signing on.

MALCOLM WALFORD,
WESTERN DOWNS VOLUNTEER RANGER

*LIDAR – airborne laser scanning which captures detailed 3D terrain data; it can see through the woodlands.



NEW STARTERS

CAN YOU DESCRIBE YOUR FIRST DAY OF VOLUNTEERING?

Don: My first few and subsequent tasks made me realise how little I knew about countryside management, however other members of the group and Rangers were, and are, so very helpful, friendly and knowledgeable that I soon looked forward to the tasks and the benefit of the steep learning curve.

Suzy: My first experience of volunteering with South Downs was going out with Nevill Brook on the water vole re-introduction project along various places on the River Meon. We were surveying for signs of water vole activity in the areas where they had been previously released and Nevill taught me how to spot water vole field signs such as runs, ladders, feeding platforms and of course, droppings. Over the next few surveys, I also learnt to read GPS locations, fill in survey recording forms, climb over gates more efficiently and to navigate rivers while wearing waders. I've gained some really invaluable surveying experience which has been amazingly useful for my college course (I am currently studying Conservation and Wildlife Management at Sparsholt College) and a real highlight for me was setting free my own pair of water voles into a river last summer on a release day.

HOW DID YOU GET INVOLVED IN THE VRS?

Don: I initially noticed a group working on the Downs while out walking my dog and after viewing the website I applied and here I am!

Suzy: I first became involved with the VRS whilst completing a work placement

last year with the QECF rangers who introduced me to the South Downs rangers and arranged a day's work experience with them for me. Once I realised what valuable experience I would gain from becoming a Volunteer Ranger, I signed up and have been volunteering since last summer.

DO YOU HAVE AN UNUSUAL FACT ABOUT YOURSELF?

Don: I have spent 25 years in the Royal Navy, 20 of those I served in submarines. My second career was as a Police Officer in Sussex police and I spent a good deal of my childhood in Jevington village.

Suzy: I grew up in Malawi, Southern Africa where we lived first on the slopes of the mountain range that form the end of the Rift Valley, and then on a tea estate in Southern Malawi. I was lucky enough to encounter a range of wildlife while living there such as elephants, baboons and vervet monkeys, hyenas, many different kinds of birds and reptiles, and I also got to do things like swimming in Lake Malawi and seeing cichlids that don't exist anywhere else.

RECOMMENDED ACTIVITY IN THE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK?

Don: Where does the list end! I now spend many hours in the South Downs walking with my dog. I have both cycled and walked the South Downs Way camping en route.

Suzy: My favourite thing to do in the South Downs National Park has got to be a relaxing hike along a route such as the Meon Valley Trail, where you can also take a slight diversion to Old Winchester Hill; one of my favourite sites in Hampshire.



CRIS AT THE GOODWOOD MOTOR RACE CIRCUIT

A WHIFF OF PETROL IN DOWNLAND THYMES?!

Hello fellow Volunteer Rangers. This is a thank you to SDNPA staff and volunteers who generously contributed to my retirement present – a session with Mithril Classic Legends at the Goodwood Motor Circuit to drive three laps in five classic cars.

It was a nice sunny September day and after the driver briefing and picking a safety helmet I went outside to the pit area to look at the cars and meet my instructors. There were about 15 classic cars and about 35 very keen people eager to start.

The first car up was a 1966 Lotus Elan, I have not driven one since I was a contractor with Bell & Colville in the early 1980s. I soon remembered how great this car was. Light and nippy in the corners but also very pointy; very enjoyable. Next up a left hand drive 1972 Porsche Carrera RS 911. I have never driven a 911 let alone a left hand drive one. It was fast, well behaved and huge fun, a real driver's car; the car was just fantastic. I was informed that it was once owned by Sir Sterling Moss.

I then went in a 1980s Red Ferrari 308, it held the track well but was a bit restricted inside, built for small Italians I expect. The next car took me back to my driving days at Coombes of Guildford in the late seventies as I have driven lots of Mk. 2 Jaguars. But as everyone

knows the best Mk. 2 Jag is the 3.8 (litres)... and as if by magic there was a 1967 Mk. 2 Jag 3.8. Bliss! When the Mk. 2 came out in the 1960s Jaguar's strapline was Grace, Space & Pace. I had great fun with the car in the corners and had to be reminded by the instructor that my three laps were up. Finally – another first for me – a Carol Shelby V8 AC Cobra, one of the fastest cars of the 1960s. This car is real old school, open top, no power steering, no servo brakes, in fact no assistant anything, just raw power, the elements and skill. My instructor gave me some wise words before I went on the track, which I noted. Everything is heavy on this car, the steering, the clutch, gear box and brakes. But just touch the accelerator and it was like being grabbed by your chest and hurled forward. This is a car that you need to be very cautious of and have respect for it. But I did enjoy driving the snarling beast.

So, after an hour it was all over, very enjoyable. Which car would I take home? The Lotus Elan would be a good track car, the Ferrari 308 a bit cramped and the Cobra should stay on the track.

So in short, I would take the 3.8 Mk 2 as the daily drive and for the weekend the Porsche RS 911.

Once again many thanks for this driving experience.

CRIS SAVILL, EX-SDNPA VOLUNTEER SUPPORT OFFICER BUT STILL A SOUTH DOWNS VOLUNTEER RANGER.



Main: Cris in an AC Cobra
Inset: Hanging on as Cris takes a corner
© Mithril Racing

AN AMERICAN ON THE SOUTH DOWNS WAY

IN 2016 THIS PARTICULAR AMERICAN (AND HIS WIFE) WENT FOR A 100-MILE WALK IN SOUTHERN ENGLAND – WE'D BEEN HEARING ABOUT THE DOWNS FOR MANY YEARS FROM OUR VRS FRIEND NEVILL BROOKE. WE HAVE HIKED FOR YEARS IN MANY VARIED PLACES, BUT DECIDED ON THE DOWNS FOR A SPRING WALK.

After a little research we concluded it would be best to hire an "outfitter", choosing him based on his business longevity and on-line ratings. We agreed on nine days of walking plus two embedded layover days. That enabled him to lay out our timing, and thus to book our accommodation and arrange for the daily transport of our bags. We never actually met him, but his bookings and transport system worked extremely well. There was never a slip, and his "deliverable" (detailed daily walk talk) was excellent.

As for the walking, what a walk! It wasn't as alpine as I sometimes prefer, but we knew that going in. What it did offer was continuous, beautiful, rolling vistas, all with a close attachment to centuries of associated history, culture, and people, all of whom

seem to love the Downs. One exemplary blend of this was about halfway through the Way, on a day we walked 13 miles from Amberley Village to Upper Beeding. That day included Chanctonbury Ring; I find prehistoric structures strangely enticing. But the experience was heightened by pre-reading about the Roman temple discovered at its center, the "recent" (1760) plantings of a huge ring of beech trees, the mass of sailplanes upridding the drafts from the Downs nearby, and a particularly good lunch at the Ring.

That was a typical day. Other highlights included meeting many wonderful dogs, a highly agitated escaped goat, huge vistas of bright yellow rapeseed fields that looked like they went on forever, and a Scottish fireman

who hiked with us in heavy rain for miles one very windy day, holding, of all things, a large umbrella. I've seen a lot of odd things hiking, but that was a new one for me! We saw people running and biking the Downs, showing us short-cuts to Bignor Roman Villa, telling us of the best beet salad they'd ever had (and it was), happily driving to/from the trailhead as needed, and really nice inn-keepers. What a trip!

It was really an enjoyable time, and great fun for us. We hope to be back for more of the UK's National Trails. In any event, thanks to the VRS for helping maintain a wonderful resource!

JAY VIVIAN,
CAPE COD, MASSACHUSETTS, USA



On the Seven Sisters © Jay Vivian

MEET YOUR NEW ASSISTANT RANGERS



NAME: CHLOË GODDARD
AREA TEAM: CENTRAL DOWNS

Major projects: A wide variety of tasks: getting to know the Central Downs area better, coppicing, hedgelaying and scrub bashing with the VRS, maintenance of infrastructure on the South Downs Way, initiating mink monitoring on the River Ems and lots more...

Where I've come from: The Manhood Wildlife and Heritage Group, working as Field Officer for the Fixing and Linking Our Wetlands project.

Favourite food: Cake!

Interests: Exploring fantastic countryside, playing hockey and netball, climbing (hills/rocks/walls/trees).



NAME: CHARLOTTE WRAY
AREA TEAM: WESTERN AREA

Major projects: I'll be heading out with our volunteer groups a few times a week, and helping the rangers with some of their bigger projects; releasing water voles on the Meon, lapwing surveys and River Fly monitoring on the Rother.

Where I've come from: I was previously leading a team of surveyors for the Forestry Commission, surveying oak trees for presence of the invasive Oak Processionary Moth.

Favourite food: All vegetables, preferably covered in tahini!

Interests: Birdwatching, rock climbing, surfing, pottery and growing vegetables!



NAME: KATE DZIUBINSKA
AREA TEAM: WEALDEN HEATHS

Major projects: Leading volunteers in practical conservation, Barn Owl Boxes with Angela Ward, possibly getting involved in an upcoming project with B-Lines, and any other projects the rangers need help with.

Where I've come from: Originally Lancashire but have just completed a conservation internship with Eastern England RSPB (Minsmere and Frampton Marsh).

Favourite food: Spicy chicken wings, halloumi and Nutella – not together though!

Interests: Lichenology, community ecology, phone photography, planning EVERYTHING on Pinterest, mountaineering, yoga and anything at the beach/sea.

PIC IN THE PARK



**TOMBSTONE TO A HORSE
(AND A COUPLE OF CURIOUS COLONELS...)**

This tombstone stands beside a mound of stones at a minor crossroad on the A272, about a mile east of Bramdean, Hampshire. In 1910, Colonel R Meinertzhagen, a British ornithologist who later served in WW1 military intelligence, was riding his horse 'Melksham' when it suddenly died, so he buried it on the spot and it is said to lie under the pile of flints shown.

**Left: Melksham's tombstone
Below: The Circle of Stones**
© Russell Cleaver

What makes this a most curious crossroad is that opposite this tombstone is a miniature Circle of Stones. These are seemingly unrelated as they date back a further 50 years to another colonel, George Greenwood, who was so interested in archaeology he built his own mini-megalith stone circle, where it remains today. The VRS visit every summer when we cut back the vegetation to ensure it remains visible to passers-by on the A272.



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.

DUKE OF CUMBERLAND ARMS, HENLEY, FERNHURST, WEST SUSSEX GU27 3HQ

Some 3 miles north of Midhurst is this distinctive pub, perched on the side of wooded hills with a stream fed garden which is set about with stone fish ponds. The inn boasts a host of awards, and offers a wide choice of ales and wines to complement an excellent menu – but quality food comes at a cost. Nevertheless, you will be given a warm welcome here and this rambling pub with its rambling nature reserve of a garden makes for a memorable visit. It's rather a challenge to find and is easier to drive south to get here, but is well worth a visit.



TRADITIONAL INN AWARD

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.



DID YOU KNOW?

The Cowdray House and estate, located close to the South Downs Centre, is named after a hedge. The ruins you see today are of the Tudor mansion built in 1530, but the original 13th Century house was earlier positioned near a hazel wood and hedge, called in French 'coudreye', namely, Cowdray.

Right: Cowdray Ruins
© Rebecca Saunders/SDNPA



CAPTION COMPETITION

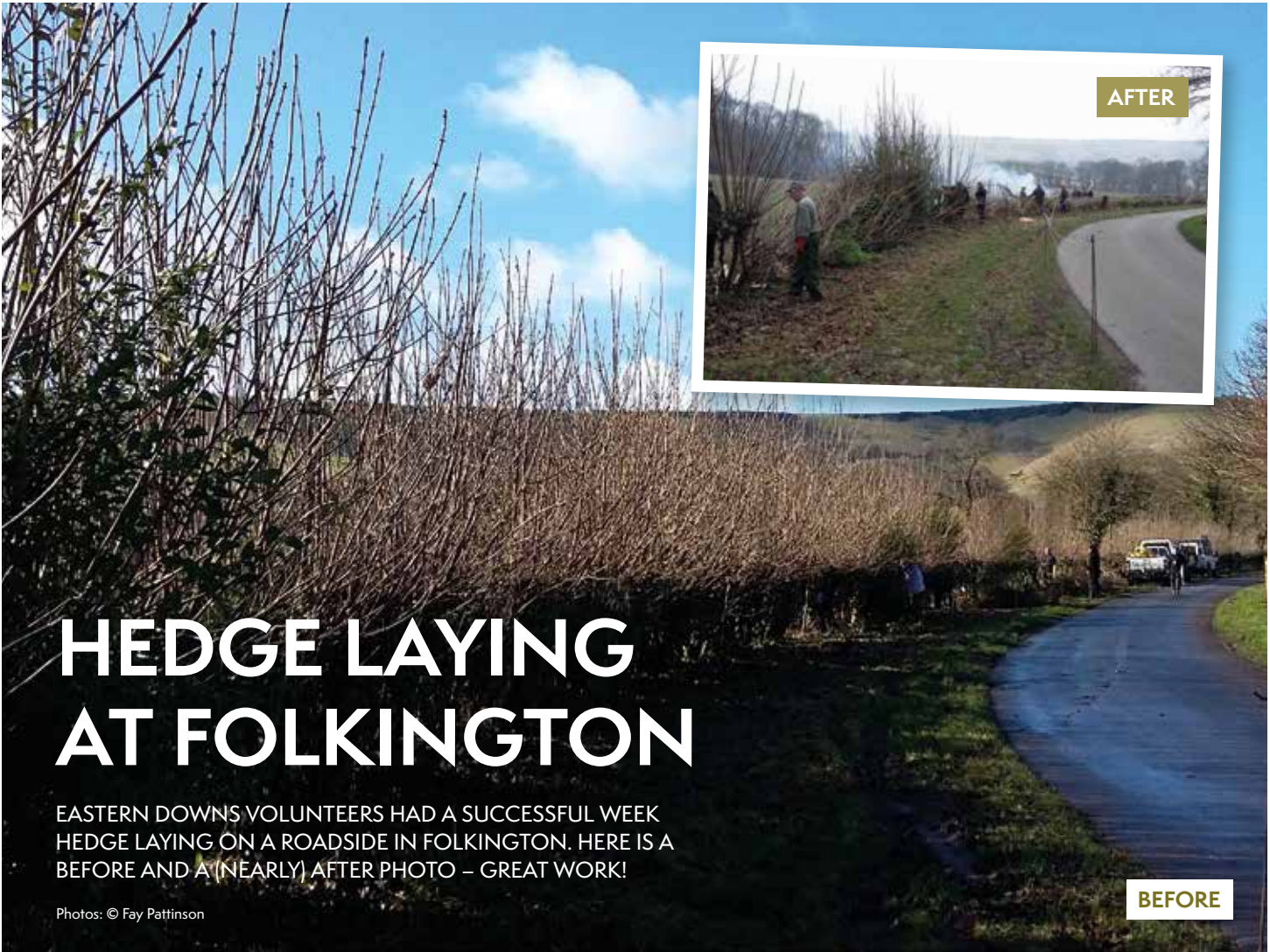
CAN YOU CREATE A WITTY CAPTION FOR THIS PHOTOGRAPH? EMAIL YOUR IDEAS TO DT@SOUTHDOWNSGOV.UK



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

"WHILST RUSSELL CARRIED ANOTHER INVISIBLE LOG TO THE FIRE ALASTAIR HOPED NOBODY WOULD NOTICE WHERE HE'D HIDDEN THE CAKE TIN."

ALASTAIR STEWART – WESTERN DOWNS VOLUNTEER RANGER



HEDGE LAYING AT FOLKINGTON

EASTERN DOWNS VOLUNTEERS HAD A SUCCESSFUL WEEK HEDGE LAYING ON A ROADSIDE IN FOLKINGTON. HERE IS A BEFORE AND A (NEARLY) AFTER PHOTO – GREAT WORK!

Photos: © Fay Pattinson

BEFORE

AFTER

CALLING ALL VOLUNTEERS...

AS USUAL WE HAVE A FULL PROGRAMME OF EVENTS TO ATTEND THIS YEAR, INCLUDING EXTRA ONES CONNECTED WITH THE HEATHLANDS REUNITED PROJECT.

We are also developing new activities to promote some of our key themes including a new Dark Night Skies floor jigsaw, spinning boxes on reasons to protect chalk grassland, and a giant water voles themed snakes and ladders game – what’s not to like!

Our need for volunteers to help staff at events is as great as ever, so if you think you would have some time to give to help us out, please watch out for the 2017 events schedule coming out in Update and let Laura Warren know which events you may be able to support – laura.warren@southdowns.gov.uk.



Above: Making wildlife sashes
© SDNPA/Anne Purkiss



Above: Exploring the archaeology of the South Downs
© Rebecca Saunders/SDNPA

SIGN UP TO SOUTH DOWNS NEWS THE NEWSLETTER FOR THE NATIONAL PARK

If you haven’t already done so please sign up to receive our new monthly e-newsletter for the South Downs National Park. Sharing up to date stories from across the National Park, details of upcoming events and a question and answer session with a different member of the National Park Authority staff each month, the e-newsletter is the best way to keep up to date with all South Downs news. Sign up now at southdowns.gov.uk/join-the-newsletter.



Right: Preview of the newsletter

SECRETS OF THE HIGH WOODS: REVEALING HIDDEN LANDSCAPES

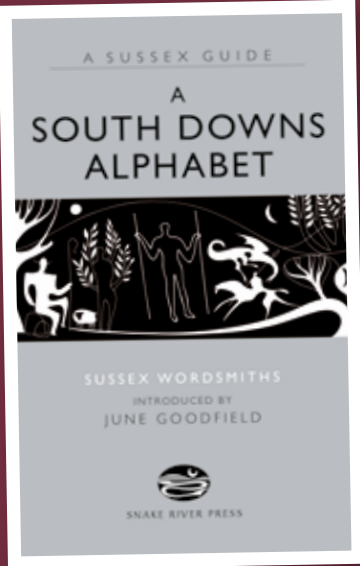
If you haven’t already got your copy of this fascinating book to come out of the Secrets of the High Woods project, copies are still available to buy for £10 from:

- The South Downs Centre in Midhurst
- Book Ferret, Arundel
- Petworth Bookshop (The Old Bakery, Golden Square)
- Fishbourne Roman Palace (Salthill Lane, Fishbourne)
- Barbican House, Lewes
- One Tree Books, Petersfield
- Kim’s Bookshop, Chichester

Below: Secrets of the High Woods book © Dominic Shearn



To order a copy from the South Downs Centre please post a cheque for £13.50 (including postage and packaging) made out to the South Downs National Park Authority, to the South Downs Centre, North Street, Midhurst, West Sussex, GU29 9DH



Above: A South Downs Alphabet
© Snake River Press

SOUTH DOWNS ALPHABET BOOK

Some of you might remember the South Downs Alphabet project which we ran last year to celebrate the rich heritage of the South Downs National Park in an alphabet of poems created by local communities.

This celebration of the South Downs heritage and the establishment of the UK’s newest national park was inspired by the work of writer, Eleanor Farjeon, who wrote the words to the much-loved hymn, **Morning has Broken**, that later became a world-wide hit for Cat Stevens. Her series of poems, **A Sussex Alphabet**, was published in 1939.

This project was a partnership venture between the South Downs National Park Authority and The Write House – an independent group of local historians and writers, founded by Drs June Goodfield and Peter Robinson, who conceived the project.

School children from across Hampshire, West and East Sussex joined up with retired and semi-retired people from the University of the Third Age, to think and write about the landscapes, wildlife and people that we value most about the South Downs today. The result is a new poetry book which will be launched on World Poetry Day, 21 March 2017, alongside a reprint of Eleanor Farjeon’s original collection.

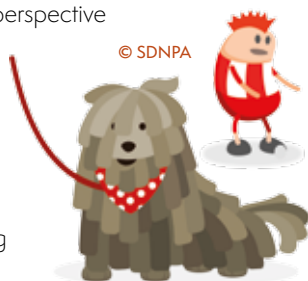
This project was supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and the National Park Authority. Snake River Press, a much-respected publisher of beautiful books about the art, culture, personalities and landscape of Sussex, generously agreed to cover all the costs of printing and publishing the final edition.

TAKE THE LEAD

AFTER THE SUCCESS OF THE FIRST STAGE OF OUR TAKE THE LEAD CAMPAIGN WE ARE NOW READY TO LAUNCH STAGE TWO...

The South Downs National Park is a fantastic place to walk your dog and responsible dog owners are very welcome. To encourage responsible dog ownership we are launching stage two of our Take the Lead campaign which involves new scenes being added to our popular Take the Lead animation (watch here southdowns.gov.uk/take-the-lead). These show new heathland landscapes and some new messaging around ground nesting birds, dog walking safety on MOD land and the importance of picking up dog poo.

The main part to this year's campaign will be four videos of real life dogs and their comical canine confessions. The videos will be filmed from the dog's perspective as they are out strolling in their favourite part of the National Park, with a comical voiceover telling their story.



© SDNPA

For example the voiceover may include quotes like, "My name is Rex and I'm a compulsive sheep chaser." while the video may show a poignant shot of Rex looking directly into the camera, confronting his issues head on...

The videos will be short and funny, ideal for sharing online through our website and social media. Although they will be light-hearted and comical – the messaging is serious and will be clear and concise. The key messages which we are now focusing on in our responsible dog walking work are:

1. Keep dogs on the lead around livestock and ground nesting birds
2. Always bag and bin your dog's poo
3. Do not walk on MOD land when the red flags are flying

Alongside the videos we are producing a new leaflet for events, a dog passport/information card, adverts and promo materials for ourselves and our partners to use.



© SDNPA

As part of this campaign we are also developing an Ambassadors programme which will recruit responsible dog walking volunteers in different locations across the National Park. These volunteers will be trained on how to positively engage and educate locals about the importance of responsible dog ownership and may be involved in helping at events, carrying out 'dog patrols' on key sites and handing out information to fellow dog walkers.

By the time you read this the campaign will have launched (6 March) so please take a moment to watch and share our online videos to help spread these important messages about responsible dog ownership in the South Downs. If you are interested in becoming a dog ambassador please sign up at southdowns.gov.uk/take-the-lead.

SOUTH DOWNS VOLUNTEER RANGER SERVICE

SOUTH DOWNS
NATIONAL PARK

Downland Thymes: News for the South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service. Issue 75, February 2017. © 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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