



# DOWNLAND THYMES

NEWS FOR THE SOUTH DOWNS VOLUNTEER  
RANGER SERVICE ISSUE 71 | SPRING 2016



## THE APRIL FRITILLARY

THE PEARL-BORDERED FRITILLARY IS ONE OF MANY SPECIES WHICH SERIOUSLY DECLINED DURING THE SECOND HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY.

The 'Woodman's Friend', as it was affectionately known was common in the days when many woodlands were actively worked for coppice products and charcoal.

One of the first butterfly species to emerge each year, it was also once known as the 'April fritillary', but this was before the Gregorian calendar was adopted (11 day shift), pushing its usual first appearance date back into early May. However, as climate change has encouraged an earlier emergence, it once again lives up to its old name now appearing from late April onwards.

The sight of numerous male pearl-bordered fritillaries swooping low over flower-rich coppice coups, rides and glades is an uplifting spectacle of a British spring. Before the hunt for females begins, they take on fuel in the form of nectar from carpets of purplish-blue bugle flowers. Other species, including dandelion, are also visited with two or three males jostling for position on a single flower-head.

The males have beautiful, large, blue eyes and hunt down freshly emerged females by sight. They are attracted to any orange-brown objects and on several occasions have investigated the orange cap of my soft drink bottle!

In late afternoon and early evening the butterflies congregate on trackside patches of bugle to replenish their energy reserves. This is the best time for photographers to capture them – the pursuit of butterflies through coppice coups is discouraged as you may disturb breeding nightjars.

Once mated, female butterflies hide away for a couple of days while their eggs ripen, before fluttering over the ground to find some suitably fresh violet plants to lay a single egg on either the underside of a leaf or on vegetation or wood litter close-by. The eggs hatch after about two weeks.

The velvety black, spiny caterpillar moults its skin three times during summer. Each time it sheds the old skin the caterpillar's soft body expands quickly.

Soon after the third moult, usually in July, it enters hibernation hidden within a curled, dried leaf.

Following a winter of inactivity the caterpillars wake in early March. Through diligent searching the caterpillars can sometimes be found sunbathing on dried leaves or wood chips, before their body temperature is raised sufficiently for them to become mobile and capable of digesting a meal of violet leaves.

After reaching full size they stop feeding and form a camouflaged chrysalis, suspended from low vegetation. Over a period of about three weeks the miracle of metamorphosis takes place inside. Then during the later part of that month the butterfly emerges, expands its tightly furled wings and once more begins its fascinating life cycle.

NEIL HULME, BUTTERFLY  
CONSERVATION – FRITILLARIES FOR  
THE FUTURE PROJECT OFFICER

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RATHFINNY TOUR

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Left: Pearl  
bordered  
fritillaries on  
dandelion  
Right: Full grown  
caterpillar  
© Neil Hulme





CHAIRMAN’S CORNER

As many of you will already know, Sarah Brett recently left Ian Hartle’s volunteering support team to go on maternity leave and was replaced by Corinne Munday. I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of all of us in the VRS, to wish Sarah all the best and to thank her for the excellent job she’s been doing – always smiling, always helpful and always committed to serving the VRS to the best of her ability. It is much appreciated Sarah, we shall miss you. At the same time a warm welcome to Corinne Munday who joined Ian’s team in late January to replace Sarah, we all look forward to working with you.

In my last Chairman’s Corner I mentioned the National Trails Conference in Whitby which was attended by four delegates from the SDNPA/VRS. From all accounts it was a very informative and valuable event, particularly the opportunity of being able to exchange views on volunteering with other UK National Parks. Arising from this, Alan Jones, who was one of the National Park volunteer delegates from Exceat, produced a valuable draft paper for the VRS Committee to consider regarding the possible establishment of an online VRS Forum which primarily would look to enhance communications within the VRS community. As it happens this paper very neatly tied into a wider review the VRS Committee had agreed to initiate at its recent meeting to look at the long term role and responsibilities of the Committee, particularly in light of the imminent SDNPA organisational restructuring. We intend to widen this discussion to all VRS members in due course.

Lastly, as you will see in the adjacent article, the SDNPA and the VRS Committee have agreed to look again at the whole question of the Long Service Award, please let us have your views.

NEVILL BROOKE, VRS CHAIRMAN

UPDATE FROM THE VRS TEAM

OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS, THE VRS COMMITTEE OF REPRESENTATIVES HAS BECOME A VERY ACTIVE BODY AND IT HAS LOOKED AT A NUMBER OF ASPECTS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE VRS AND SDNPA.

The latest fruit of our joint working is a new Volunteer Agreement which seeks to outline, in general terms, what Volunteer Rangers can expect from SDNPA; what we ask for in return and how we work together. I think it’s largely common sense and I hope there is nothing contentious in there. However, if you’ve got any comments on it or any of the other information you get from us (or don’t get from us!), please get in touch with me, or talk to one of the other members of the Committee. A copy of the Agreement was sent to all active Volunteer Rangers in early February and it can also be found on the Volunteer section of the SDNPA Intranet alongside key documents. It is now sent out to all new Volunteer Rangers as part of a follow-up ‘pack’ of information.

Another subject discussed by the VRS Committee meeting recently was how we should recognise the fantastic long-term contribution that many Volunteer Rangers make to the National Park. VRS Chair Nevill Brooke has written a short note below and we would very much like to hear your views. Is a 9ct gold pin badge still the best way to say thank you for working with the VRS for 20

years? Is there something else that would be better? Would you prefer some of the money to be spent on something more practical – equipment, training, Dolce and Gabbana safety specs! Let us know what you think.

At the time of writing, the implications of the National Park Authority’s organisational restructure for Volunteer Rangers were not clear. What is clear is a commitment to continuing to support the VRS and I hope we will have been able to clarify at least some of this with you by the time you read this.

As always, please keep sending us contributions for future editions of *Downland Thymes*. We had a fantastic response to our call for articles this time and it would be great for that to continue; it makes it much easier to produce a newsletter which really has something for everyone in it, wherever you volunteer and whatever your role(s).

The very best to you all, thank you from us all for everything that you do for the South Downs.

IAN HARTLE, SDNPA VOLUNTEER DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

VOLUNTEER LONG SERVICE AWARD



At the recent VRS Committee meeting we agreed to provide feedback to the SDNPA on the current volunteer Long Service Award (LSA).

Currently LSAs are awarded in the form of a badge to those individuals who have served 10, 20 or 30 years as a VRS ranger – these are presented at the Annual VRS AGM by senior SDNPA Management. Where an individual cannot attend the AGM they are presented locally by the relevant SDNPA Area Manager.

So the first question is on timings – are these still appropriate or should we consider, say, a 25 year award as well? In terms of the actual award – a metal pin badge – is this still appropriate or should we use something different, if so, what?

Please send any comments and suggestions to **Ian Hartle** by **31 May 2016**. Many thanks.

NEVILL BROOKE, VRS CHAIRMAN



Harvest mouse  
© D. Middleton

“[RANGER ROB] SET THE SCENE BY HIGHLIGHTING THAT WHAT WE WERE ABOUT TO DO WAS INITIATED BY GILBERT WHITE IN THE 1760S!”

Left: Roger Lacy inspecting a vacant harvest mouse nest.  
© Russell Cleaver

HARVEST MOUSE SURVEY

IT WAS WITH GREAT EXPECTATION THAT THE VRS WESTERN SUNDAY TEAM GATHERED AT QUEEN ELIZABETH COUNTRY PARK’S VISITOR CENTRE READY TO PARTICIPATE IN THE NOVEMBER HARVEST MOUSE SURVEY AT SELBORNE.

Ranger Rob introduced us to the standard safety points and gave a quick briefing about the plan for the day. He set the scene by highlighting that what we were about to do was initiated by Gilbert White in the 1760s! Guest ecologist Francesca Pella then told us about the habits of harvest mice, their nests and where we were likely to find them. Rob revealed his ‘highlighted maps’ and delivered his master plan to cover the areas where the nests were likely to be found. It felt very much like Monty briefing his staff in North Africa.

We split into groups and hastily went to our designated areas to find the elusive harvest mouse nests. Each group was made up of people of varying experience and needless to say Gary, one of the Sunday team old sweats, spotted his first of the day in under four minutes! Others were not so lucky and

when we returned to the reception area for lunch our group had accrued a grand total of four nests. However, other groups experienced higher levels of success. For example Terry, another old sweat, announced his group’s morning total was an amazing 43! Obviously it was merely a coincidence that Rob was also in that group and it was pure luck that they had the best area...

Lunch was provided and served by farmer Kate Faulkner which proved to be a fabulous feast of homemade soups, sausages, rolls, cakes, chocolate bars and fruit for the healthy individuals. This was made even more pleasant by being joined by local farmers who were taking a break from their nearby hedge-laying training.

Suitably nourished and rested we deployed for the second phase of harvest mouse

nest discovery. In each of the groups some members had managed to hone their spotting skills and were able to find the amazing tiny balls of matted grass or meticulously camouflaged deep inside the grass tussocks. Most of us came away satisfied and enthused in the knowledge that we had followed in the footsteps of Gilbert White.

All in all yet another thoroughly enjoyable day in the National Park thanks to the efforts of all involved and in particular to Rob, Chris, Francesca and Kate. Roll on the next survey when hopefully I shall be able to relay the experience of discovering that first nest!

JOHN LOWE, WESTERN DOWNS VOLUNTEER RANGER





# A HISTORY OF BOUNDARIES

Main: South Downs Volunteer Rangers hedge laying at Kingston  
Below: Different styles of European hedges

## APPLE DAY AT SLINDON

THE LITTLE VILLAGE OF SLINDON IN WEST SUSSEX WELCOMED OVER 1,000 PEOPLE ON SATURDAY 10 OCTOBER TO CELEBRATE THE NATIONAL TRUST'S THIRD SLINDON ESTATE APPLE DAY, AN AUTUMNAL FETE CELEBRATING ALL THINGS APPLE.

The field behind the community Forge Shop/Cafe was transformed for the day by volunteers and rangers. As well as all-day live music, a farmers' market and traditional fete games, apples from the village's gardens were pressed with a reconstructed press to make the village cider.

It was a fabulous day, well supported by locals and visitors alike. The atmosphere created by the South Downs Folk Singers, Fishbourne Morris Dancers and bands such as 'Renegade Dogs' and 'Said the Maiden' was very fitting for a traditional English fete on a glorious autumnal day. If your bag is local food, good booze and great entertainment with like-minded people then Slindon Apple Day ticks the boxes.

As a member of the South Downs Folk Singers ([southdownsfolksingers.blogspot.co.uk](http://southdownsfolksingers.blogspot.co.uk)) this day reminded me of where the traditional songs we sing originated: in the homes and pubs of the working population. I suspect nothing has changed back to prehistory with the themes we sing about – love, betrayal and wisdom that time has betrothed to us.

Most of the charitable events the South Downs Folk Singers support are at venues to generate awareness of the songs of the generation of men and their forebears that were lost after the First World War. The smell of the apple pressing brought back memories of visiting my grandfather at his small holding in Burnham-on-Sea, Somerset where he

had a small orchard and made his own cider which he called 'Witch's Brew'!

I was only about 8 when, on a hot summer's day, he poured me a glass of his crystal-clear cider to quench my thirst after helping him dig in the garden. I poured it straight down my throat and didn't wake up until mid-evening!

**JOHN CRANE, SECRETS OF THE HIGH WOODS VOLUNTEER RANGER**

Main: Apples for pressing  
Left: Accapella. Apple Day at Slindon Estate

© National Trust Scott Ramsey Photography

WHAT DRIVES AN APPARENTLY NORMAL GUY TO, ONE DAY, LEAVE HOME AND SPEND THE NEXT 30 YEARS SURVEYING, RESEARCHING AND WRITING A BOOK OF TWO VOLUMES AND A TOTAL OF 1280 PAGES CATEGORISING THE HEDGES, BANKS AND WALLS IN EUROPE'S FIELDS?

That is exactly what Georg Müller has done and what a book it is; without question the most comprehensive reference book on one of Europe's disappearing legacies. If you want to know how the Albanians make their stick picket fences, or which is the only country to have seaweed earth-banks, or how the discovery of field walls in Ireland dating from 3000BC changed archaeologists' views of our Neolithic ancestors, this is the book for you.

Although clearly a reference book, it is far from a dry tome and makes a good read for anyone interested in the countryside. Illustrated by some beautiful photographs and drawings by Müller, I particularly like those capturing the finer differences of 'folded, bent, stepped, woven and crossed' hedge styles. Although adopting a fairly dispassionate 'voice', Herr Müller's enthusiasm shines through. He is clearly dismayed by the wholesale use of barbed wire and I detect some enthusiasm for the variety of British and Irish hedges and dry wall styles.

Our earth-banks, hedge laying styles and dry stone walling are comprehensively covered. Müller indicates that, with few

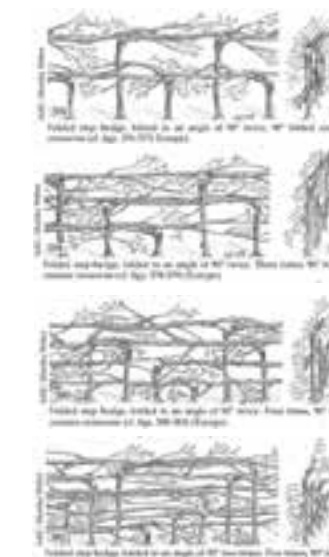
exceptions, it is only here that these skills have been systematically retained or re-learned, particularly regarding hedge laying. We are now beginning to teach enthusiasts in other European countries to do the same; a process to which, in my own small way, I have contributed to by teaching hedge laying in Normandy. It is mostly in Holland that hedge laying has been re-introduced by the British, focusing on the old Dutch style of hedging with a few English refinements to the technique. Southern England residents may be disappointed by the lack of inclusion of flint walls in the book, I presume because they are not really field boundaries but boundaries to gardens or estates, although there may be a field on one side.

Any criticisms? Not really, one or two cases of tortuous English as a result of the translation from German but it was always clear what was meant.

Herr Müller commenced his research because he found the changes in his local fields in Germany depressing and wanted to bring what was being lost to public attention. He has succeeded in producing a book

that is a rare combination of comprehensive academic detail as well as an enjoyable read. It is hoped that it may go some way to assist a revival of the European landscape.

**IAN RUNCIE, EASTERN DOWNS VOLUNTEER RANGER**



Europe's Field Boundaries by Georg Müller.  
Neuer Kunstverlag ISBN 978-3-944526-10-2  
**WALLHECKE.DE**





# NEW ACCESS PATHS

I want to make fellow volunteers aware of the new paths that have opened up over the National Trust land at Gayles Farm between Birling Gap and Seven Sisters Country Park. There is a splendid new gate directly on top of the hill up from the dew pond at the sea end of Crowlink valley. You can then walk inland parallel to the very busy coastal stretch of the South Downs Way to a stile. After visiting a lonely trig point and going over another stile from there follow the fence line around to a hidden kissing gate with a way-marker stating this is the 'Habitat Trail'. This is a slightly neglected and mysterious trail rapidly falling into disrepair which is rather sad because it is the prelude to a lovely undulating inland walk along to Exceat New Barn.

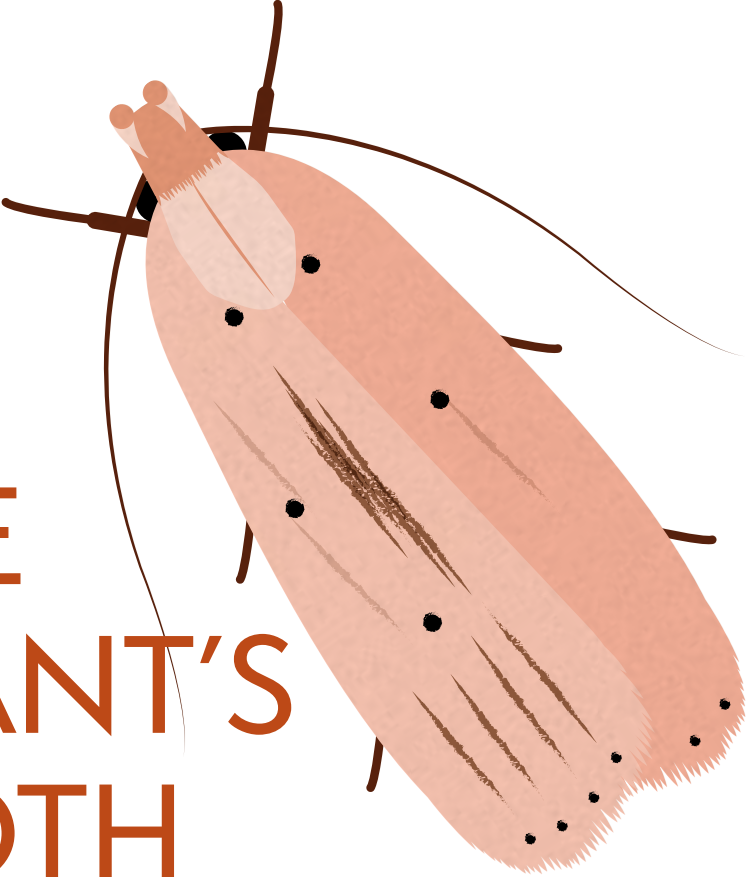
I wonder if this could be a volunteer project to reinstate the short stretch of the trail through the scrub before it breaks out into the open and rolling countryside?

At the barn you can head steeply uphill and climb another stile. Instead of taking the existing way marked path to the sea you turn sharp left through another gate and can walk around field edge paths heading in a westerly direction to lead you to the entrance drive of Gayles Farm. Here another new gate tucked away in the hedge leads out to the bus stop and the main coast road. You can either wait for a bus or, if you want to make a circular walk, cross over into Friston Forest and follow the path shadowing the road right along to Friston pond and back down Crowlink valley to the pond where this description started.

JEAN BLEMINGS, EASTERN DOWNS  
VOLUNTEER RANGER

Above: Overlooking the Seven Sisters cliffs  
towards Birling Gap  
© Peter Cairns

# THE GIANT'S MOTH



THE DAY STARTED OUT WET AS THE EASTERN WEDNESDAY GROUP JOINED MATT DOWSE IN EARLY NOVEMBER AT THE LONG MAN OF WILMINGTON, A FIGURE OUTLINED ON THE CHALK HILLSIDE.

He overlooks the Cuckmere valley and is alternatively known as the Wilmington Giant. We were to clear a patch of invasive scrub spoiling a piece of exquisite chalk grassland on a steep slope just a few tens of metres from the national landmark. The steep slope made the access to the site and the working conditions difficult, the early morning rain causing the surface to be slippery. Later a giant beach-ball shaped piece of gorse bounced right down to the bottom of the hill, nobly retrieved by Mike Squires, who brought it back up to the fire site.

A small pale brown moth fluttered up. I found a pot in my bag and somehow managed to relocate and capture it. To the naked eye only the rounded wing and a median longitudinal streak were noticeable features. Back at home under a magnifying glass, various dots became visible, including one which had no opposite pair. Had my specimen been damaged? I thumbed through my book on micro moths. Yes there was a match, and the illustration showed one odd dot. (I suspect the wing fold on the moth at rest obscures a dot on the other appendage.)

The moth is called *agonopterix pallonella*. Now for the blurb; it hibernates as an adult (we must have rudely awakened it from its winter sleep) and it is very local, confined to the south on chalk grassland, especially near the coast.

Does 6 kilometres count as being near? It eats greater knapweed and occasionally common knapweed or saw-wort. This finding made the day's task of maintaining and restoring chalk grassland all the more worthwhile. However, *agonopterix pallonella* is hardly a name that inspires or sticks in the memory, unless you happen to be a Latin scholar. Why not give it an English name? My suggestion is The Giant's Moth but at 12mm in length it might be compared with calling The Long Man – Little John...

TIM VISICK, EASTERN DOWNS  
VOLUNTEER RANGER

.....  
"WHY NOT GIVE IT AN ENGLISH NAME? MY SUGGESTION IS THE GIANT'S MOTH BUT AT 12MM IN LENGTH IT MIGHT BE COMPARED WITH CALLING THE LONG MAN – LITTLE JOHN..."





# SPOTLIGHT

## CENTRAL DOWNS

**“WHERE ARE WE GOING? WHAT ARE WE DOING?” WE ENQUIRE AS WE CLIMB INTO THE LAND ROVER AT BARNHAM STATION CAR PARK.**

Being a Sunday we are a mixed age group of both sexes, retired and workers – some old timers and some newer recruits.

“Do we need wellies? Are we having a fire?” we ask the ranger – usually Ian, Tom or Simon. They patiently answer us before we drive off heading for the Downs, usually north of Chichester but sometimes towards Hampshire or east to Storrington or Steyning. There is chatter all the way as we catch up with old friends or get to know new volunteers.

We pile out near the work site and ask if a fire is planned – always good news. The variety of sites mean some have superb views while others are in woodland. The

site also determines the type of task for the day but they usually involve scrub and path clearance, coppicing, fence, gates or steps work. After a briefing on safety, what we are aiming to do and where, we start working, some together and some further apart so everyone feels happy. At coffee time sitting on the ground nearby we share biscuits while we catch up on news. Breaks are negotiable and no pressure is put on us if we feel like a rest now and again.

Most tasks with Darren Rolfe, West Sussex County Council ranger, amuse us as he brings a generator, kettle, benches, coffee and chocolate biscuits! However many of his tasks are tough and often seriously wet such as installing a kissing gate with horizontal rain (or was it snow?) and finding ourselves standing in a slurry run-off! But some days the sun shines such as the hot day for Tom’s fence posts and gate installation on the South Downs Way at Annington (see photo) where

the solid chalk and flint were like concrete and hard to dig. Working together to site the posts, dig the holes to the exact depth (Tom was very professional insisting on accurate measurement) and inserting the posts upright was great fun. We then had to fit the gate furniture correctly so the gate closed properly – very satisfying but one of the hardest tasks yet.

We love the camaraderie and the way the group gels together even though we have a monthly rota so the group varies each Sunday. We enjoy working in parts of the Downs that we would not normally visit and we always have a laugh as do the various animals that watch us – ponies, sheep, cows or pigs. Walkers and cyclists often acknowledge our work too which makes it all worthwhile and there is no better way to spend our free time – much more fun than going to the gym for exercise.

**HELENA LEWIS, CENTRAL DOWNS  
VOLUNTEER RANGER**

**“WE LOVE THE CAMARADERIE AND THE WAY THE GROUP GELS TOGETHER...”**

Above: Many hands at work on the SDW next to Annington piggery.  
© Helena Lewis

# NEW STARTERS



**NAME:**  
Michaela Pape

**AREA:**  
Western Downs





**NAME:**  
Peter Long

**AREA:**  
Western Downs



**CAN YOU DESCRIBE YOUR FIRST DAY OF VOLUNTEERING?**

My first day was spent in the office; I was asked to do some research into other water vole reintroduction projects in the country.

**HOW DID YOU GET INVOLVED WITH THE VRS?**

I have been volunteering for a variety of organisations for about 9 years and have a relevant degree with my goal to obtain a ranger position. I was a candidate for the Assistant Ranger position for the Western Downs but receiving feedback I was asked to volunteer as the team felt they could help me with improving my skill set.

**DO YOU HAVE AN UNUSUAL FACT ABOUT YOURSELF?**

I am involved with a Multi-Period Living History Group called Raven Tor who put on a range of events mostly at Arundel Castle. I learn to fight in the medieval style and take part in show-and-tell sessions.

**RECOMMENDED ACTIVITY IN THE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK?**

I don’t think I can answer this as there are so many sites and tasks within the National Park and so many partner organisations that volunteers work for. I would say I recommend the variety of all tasks.

After working on the water for and with the Royal Navy these past 50 years, I joined the VRS at QECF in June 2015 upon my retirement. The diversity of the work is very interesting, having not done this type of work before. I am finding new skills in all areas/aspects of nature, whether it’s cleaning out ditches, building hedges, checking different fauna and flora or just raking and burning after brush cutting.

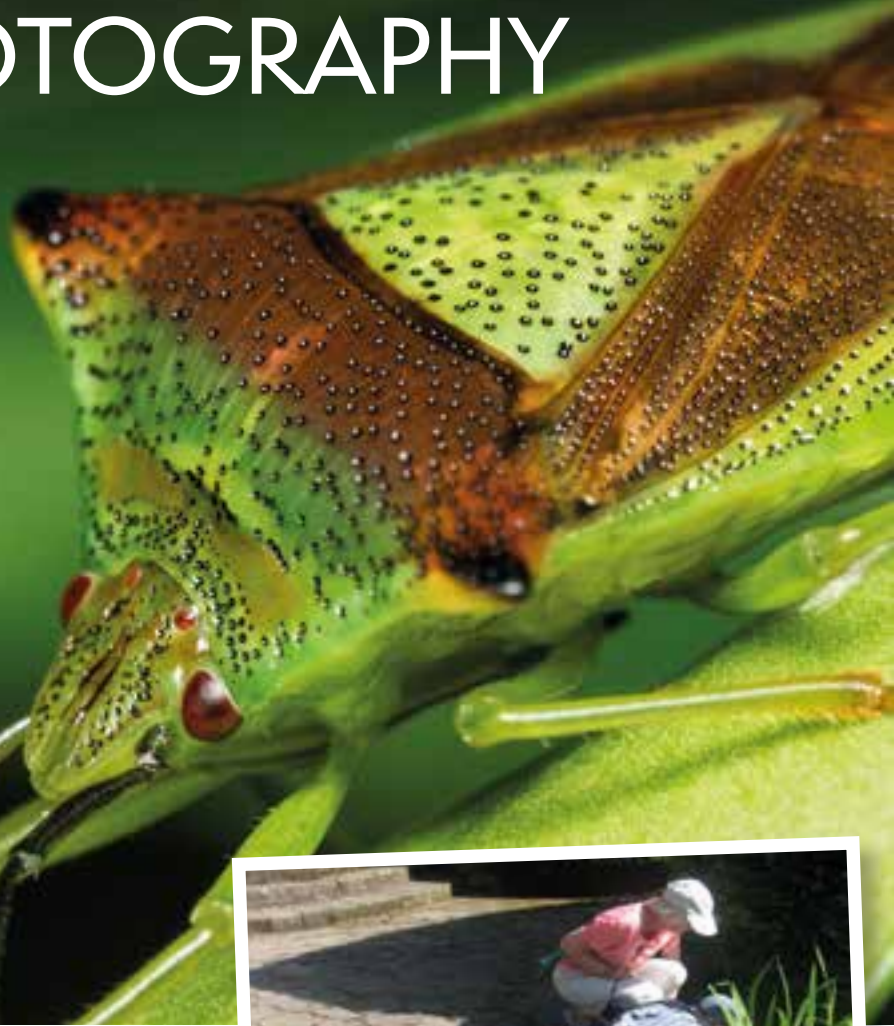
It is also about being out in the open air come rain or shine and giving something back to the community. I am with some great people who help, tell, inform and show you what it is all about.

The opportunities that are on offer to help you learn are endless and the rangers are always on hand to help you acquire these new skills as and when they arise.

The VRS has helped me change my views on life, the countryside and the way I see the future.



# MACRO PHOTOGRAPHY



I'M IN MY THIRD ENJOYABLE YEAR AS A VOLUNTEER RANGER AND A SURPRISING OUTCOME HAS BEEN A NEW PASSION FOR ME, MACRO PHOTOGRAPHY AND AN INTEREST IN ENTOMOLOGY.

I've always been a "snap-shooter" of people and landscapes but rarely focused on anything smaller than a human head – when walking I saw the views but never the bugs.

My new hobby has its origins in a talk on bumblebees given to our Thursday group by Cliff Hepburn, another volunteer ranger. It was suggested we had a photo competition to see who could take the best bumblebee pictures. Great, I thought, grabbed my camera and rushed out to find bumblebees to photograph. Disappointment, my camera was not up to the job – a replacement was needed.

Cameras are not cheap and I didn't want to make an expensive mistake so I googled "insect photography" to see what inspiring macro-photographers were doing. There's a lot of information out there but eventually I identified a Singapore resident named Faiz Bustamente who has a great website

[mirrorlessmacro.blogspot.co.uk](http://mirrorlessmacro.blogspot.co.uk) displaying his photographs, techniques and equipment. I contacted Faiz via Facebook and he was extremely helpful so I eventually invested in a suitable camera and macro lens.

I have found macro photography very challenging. Insects and spiders are often very difficult to locate as they are so small and are usually in inconvenient places. They refuse to pose and being alive are usually on the move. Photographing dead insects, unless being eaten by a bigger one, is a big no, no. The macro lens requires that you are very close to your subject, with my lens its 8cm, so you have to creep up very slowly. You focus manually by moving back and forth so you need a steady hand and good eye sight. Illuminating small insects with a flash without blowing out the detail is a challenge and you need to experiment with all sorts of

flash diffusers. Apart from the equipment you need patience and perseverance.

Photographing bugs and not knowing what they are is not much fun so I have found great Facebook sites to assist with identification. Post a picture on the "Insects of Britain & Northern Europe" or the "British Spider Identification Group" sites and you will get a response and an identification within the hour, usually accompanied by lots of discussion if members disagree.

The detail and colours you see on insects and spiders when magnified never ceases to amaze me. I've a lot to learn but I've never had so much fun crawling around in the countryside – I am totally addicted and can recommend it to anyone interested in nature.

**ROGER KIERNAN, EASTERN DOWNS VOLUNTEER RANGER**

"WE'VE ALREADY PLANTED OVER 13,000 NATIVE TREE SAPLINGS INCLUDING OAK, BEECH AND FIELD MAPLE."



## THE RISE OF NORTHWOOD

NESTLED WITHIN SLINDON ESTATE YOU'LL FIND THE NATIONAL TRUST'S LARGEST WOODLAND RESTORATION PROJECT, THE 'RISE OF NORTHWOOD' COMING ON LEAPS AND BOUNDS.

Named the 'Rise of Northwood' after the ancient oak and beech trees that once stood on the site, this 10 year project will see 185 acres of former arable fields (equivalent to 105 football pitches) return to their pre-World War One landscape.

During both World Wars, trees in Northwood were felled and the area was farmed to help support British food production. The farming role continued until September 2013 when the land was returned to the National Trust to be managed.

The 'Rise of Northwood' only became a reality when the Slindon Estate received a bequest from a Mr John Springthorpe Hunt. He loved the South Downs and was particularly interested in the creation of woodland. With a grant from the Forestry Commission the National Trust have been able to start the process of returning this landscape back to its former woodland through seed dispersal and tree planting.

There are still pockets of the original ancient woodland that remain today, however these areas are small and disconnected from each other. Natural regeneration of trees will gradually increase the size of the woods and connect these isolated pockets together, allowing wildlife to thrive once more.

Getting a project of this size off the ground has taken a huge amount of effort. With help from the community and local organisations including the South Downs National Park Volunteer Rangers, we've already planted over 13,000 native tree saplings including oak, beech and field maple. At this point I must say thank you to everybody who has already been involved in contributing towards a woodland legacy that will be enjoyed for generations to come.

Many tasks are now ongoing to protect the new saplings and areas of natural regeneration. There are also plenty of exciting plans for the years ahead including

the creation of woodland pasture. We're always in need of willing volunteers to help with the project so check out our 'Rise of Northwood' blog to find out more about our work, how you can help and details of upcoming tree planting events – [riseofnorthwoodnt.wordpress.com](http://riseofnorthwoodnt.wordpress.com)

Northwood is accessible by a network of public footpaths and bridleways. We've also opened up some permissive pathways directly through the site to allow you to explore even further. Next time you have a chance, pop down to Northwood and see this new woodland growing right before your eyes.

**HANNAH WOODHOUSE, NORTHWOOD PROJECT RANGER**

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**Main: Sowing the seeds**  
**Left: Planting trees**  
© National Trust Scott Ramsey Photography



# 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](mailto:dt@southdowns.gov.uk) with a picture.



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.

## THE THREE HORSESHOES, ELSTED, WEST SUSSEX, GU29 0JY

A delightful old pub with a pleasant, unspoilt interior. This is a genuine local pub serving a variety of real ales and good food to the local community but beware it can get packed at the weekends. And why? Because of its large garden offering magnificent views of the ridge of the South Downs. For me it's probably the best view from a pub in the National Park that you can find. Well worth a visit.

RUSSELL CLEAVER, WESTERN DOWNS  
VOLUNTEER RANGER



## PIC IN THE PARK

SELBORNE WATER SUPPLY  
(GRID REF SU 744330)

At the edge of Selborne, Hampshire, you can find a Victorian memorial to the Reverend Gilbert White in the form of a lion's head water trough.

A spring that rose from nearby Noar Hill was diverted here by public subscription in 1879 to become the principle water supply to the village. Beside the road a retaining wall holds back most of the water to enable an overflow to discharge through the lion's mouth into a trough. At least that's what used to occur, today it is poorly maintained and most water comes out of a nearby pipe. But it remains an interesting feature which is easily spotted alongside the main road.

# REVIEWS

## A FOREST, BY MARC MARTIN 2015. TEMPLAR PUBLISHING £7.99

This inspirational fairy tale for children aged 7 and under is beautifully illustrated with dense colour, rich textures and the odd scribble. Simply but eloquently told, *A Forest* offers wise words about looking after our forests and our world. I found this at a National Trust shop and fell in love with it. A perfect purchase for future volunteer rangers and those of us who like children's books!

JILL SEENEY, EASTERN DOWNS  
VOLUNTEER RANGER



## SAID THE MAIDEN, CD

These three young ladies were the winners of the Bristol Folk Festival Isambard Folk Award 2015 and have supported Dave Swarbrick, one of the most influential fiddle players today, on several gigs.

When performing free in support of the Slindon Village Apple Day they entranced us with their wonderful harmonies and multi instrumental skills. Most of the tracks on the album are traditional covers with their own arrangements but they do write their own songs too.

The first track on the album 'The Fine Young Smith' is a saucy tale of a lady in search of somebody with the skills to enhance her run down forge. Quite apt as it was sung behind the Forge Shop at Slindon.

The other nine tracks cover the usual range of love, betrayal, perceived wisdom, being taken for a fool, and where you eventually end up if you've been reasonably good, a bit like social media. Check them out on YouTube, I think you'll be impressed.

JOHN CRANE, SECRETS OF THE HIGH  
WOODS VOLUNTEER RANGER

# WANTED

## INQUISITIVE VOLUNTEERS

Do you like discovering new places? Do you like delving into history? Do you like finding a cosy pub and putting your feet up in front of a roaring fire? If you answered yes to any of the above then this is the job for you! The Downland Thymes team are looking for at least one volunteer from each area of the National Park to help uncover the best pubs, the most interesting landmarks, the fascinating books and much more. You don't need to be a professional writer, we can help with that, all you have to do is get out into the Downs and discover its hidden gems. Please email [dt@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:dt@southdowns.gov.uk) stating your interest and volunteering area.



# CAPTION COMPETITION

CAN YOU CREATE A WITTY CAPTION FOR THIS PHOTOGRAPH? EMAIL YOUR IDEAS TO [DT@SOUTHDOWNSGOV.UK](mailto:DT@SOUTHDOWNSGOV.UK)



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

"I THINK I'VE JUST FOUND THE LAST MAN WHO TRIED TO CLEAR THIS BLOCKAGE"

GRAHAM WYNN







# PHOTO COMPETITION

A very different shot of the famous cottages at Cuckmere Haven won **first prize** in the South Downs National Park photo competition 2015–16 for **Piers Fearick** from East Preston, near Littlehampton in West Sussex. In the first competition the 31-year-old has entered he also won the special ‘Dark Skies’ award and a total prize of £350.

**Second prize** was awarded to **Martin Offer** from Pagham for his crisp and beautifully composed photo of sheep and woods in a hoar frost and **third prize** went to **Rhian White** from Brighton for her brilliantly timed shot silhouetting a playful dog jumping in front of the setting sun.



More than 20,000 long-distance walkers, cyclists and riders complete the 160km South Downs Way every year and many more will explore a section of it. Some for pleasure, others for the challenge and many to raise money for charity. A new donation scheme means that people who’ve enjoyed the trail now have the chance to give something back. As volunteers know so well it takes a lot of hard work to keep the South Downs Way in

good condition. However, like many publicly funded initiatives resources are limited so if everyone who used the trail gave just £1 we could make the Trail even better. Donations of any size are now welcome with 80 per cent of money received being used to directly fund improvements to the Trail. The remaining 20 per cent will be used to support the Trail website, where around 140,000 people go every year to find free and

## NEW DONATION SCHEME FOR THE SOUTH DOWNS WAY

independent information on how to access the Trail, how to break it up into sections, where to stay and much more – this website isn’t publicly funded.

To make a donation towards the South Downs Way visit [nationaltrail.co.uk/south-downs-way/donate](http://nationaltrail.co.uk/south-downs-way/donate)

## NEW SECTION OF CENTURION WAY OPENS

A 2.5km stretch of new and improved path has opened up year-round access for walkers and cyclists of all abilities from Chichester into the heart of the South Downs National Park. The new section of the Centurion Way was officially opened by Trevor Beattie, CEO for the South Downs National Park Authority and Alex Barron, Chief Executive of the Edward James Foundation on Tuesday 22 December 2015. The trail follows the line of the old Chichester to Midhurst railway line, the last section of which closed in 1991.

For the time being the trail ends with information panels at West Dean tunnel telling the story of the railway line. Existing access to the village itself stays the same via the segregated path alongside the A286 – further sections of the route will be created as funding becomes available. The project is one small part of a £5 million investment, supported by the Department for Transport, in a network of core cycling and shared paths across the South Downs National Park.



© SDNPA/Jo Glyde





# A TOUR OF RATHFINNY WINE ESTATE

IN NOVEMBER LAST YEAR ASSISTANT RANGER MATT DOWSE ARRANGED A JOINT TASK DAY FOR THE SEVEN SISTERS VOLUNTEER WORK GROUPS.

The morning involved scrub clearance and burning on the north facing slope of Cradle Valley on the Rathfinny Wine Estate. After lunch we had a tour of the vineyard, winery and flint barns by Richard James, a former South Downs Ranger, now the Environment and Operations Manager at Rathfinny.

The original Rathfinny Farm was purchased in 2010 by owners, Mark and Sarah Driver. Since then the estate has developed with the vineyard now covering 180 acres along the south facing slope of Cradle Valley. It is already the largest vineyard in the UK with a target of 380 acres to be planted by 2020.

Those of us who have worked on the north slope over the years can remember the early development of the vineyard. The “roofless” derelict flint barns, the early environment

studies and soil analysis and the mini ‘meteorological’ stations dotted along the valley measuring air and soil temperatures, wind speeds etc. I can also remember the first vines, which were grown in Germany, being planted in early 2012 using a GPS system.

On the tour we were shown recently planted vines and the winery’s new grape presses, large temperature controlled storage tanks and bottling plant. 10,000 bottles of Chardonnay (2014 harvest) were in store with the equivalent of a further 40,000 bottles of wine (2015 harvest) in the storage tanks. The first commercial sales of this wine will be in late 2017 and early 2018. Richard pointed out that 98 per cent of Rathfinny’s production will be sparkling wine, predominantly Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier,

with a target figure of one million bottles per annum produced from 2020 onwards. Supermarkets are out as preferred sales will be to independent retailers and hotels both at home and abroad.

The final part of the tour was to the now restored flint barns which are hotel accommodation and a restaurant. Muddy boots removed, we were invited in to have tea and biscuits.

Rathfinny operate their own estate tours which begin in March and start and finish at their Alfriston retail outlet, The Gun Room. There is also a separate signposted ‘Rathfinny Trail’ which starts at this point.

IAN WILDRIDGE, EASTERN DOWNS  
VOLUNTEER RANGER

## FOXHOLES CAMPING BARN

On 17 December 2015 volunteers from the Eastern and Central Downs joined forces for a Christmas task and buffet at Foxholes Camping Barn, Seven Sisters Country Park. Around 50 volunteers carried out the morning task clearing tree growth and undergrowth around (and in) the pond in the grounds of Foxholes Farm. With so many volunteers present there was plenty of cutting and burning.

As a thank you and Christmas celebration we then sat down to a lovely buffet and an illustrated talk on bumblebees from Dave Goulson Professor of Biology at Sussex University.

IAN WILDRIDGE, EASTERN DOWNS  
VOLUNTEER RANGER



Left: Working up an appetite  
Above: Christmas buffet lunch to celebrate  
© Ian Wildridge