



DOWNLAND THYMES

NEWS FOR THE SOUTH DOWNS VOLUNTEER
RANGER SERVICE ISSUE 77 | AUTUMN 2017

A VISIT TO TOTTINGTON WOOD

IN APRIL A GROUP OF SOUTH DOWNS VOLUNTEERS AND SDNPA RANGERS MET BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION'S FRITILLARIES FOR THE FUTURE PROJECT OFFICER, NEIL HULME, FOR A WALK AROUND A PRIVATELY OWNED PART OF TOTTINGTON WOOD (SMALL DOLE).



The event, which focused on spring butterflies and woodland flowers, was arranged as a mark of gratitude for all the help provided by volunteers in managing this and many other sites over recent years.

The wood has benefited greatly from the cutting of overstood hazel coppice and thinning of the tree canopy, allowing more light to penetrate to the woodland floor, triggering a spectacular display of early season flowers. The results of the management work performed over the autumn and winter are clear to see, and each season sees a further increase in the wildlife here, with ever greater numbers of butterflies and birds. This was a great opportunity for volunteers to appreciate the fruits of their labour.

The visit was well timed with bluebells at the very peak of their all-too-short

season, forming extensive, dense carpets. Plenty of other flowers added splashes of colour to the woodland floor, including early purple orchid, lesser celandine, wood anemone, red campion, greater stitchwort, wood spurge and common dog-violet. Some areas contained clumps of spurge laurel, and horsetails were beginning to show in the damper parts of the wood, bordering a small stream which empties into a beautiful pond.

Nine species of butterfly were seen during the walk, including orange-tip, brimstone, green-veined white, small white, peacock, red admiral, small tortoiseshell, speckled wood and holly blue. This diversity of species is only found in the actively managed parts of the wider woodland, much of which is overgrown and dark. Another area, at the opposite corner of the

complex, is cared for by the Tottington Woodlanders.

Birdlife has also benefitted from the work of the owner and volunteers making it one of the noisiest parts of Tottington Wood. Nuthatch, tree creeper, great spotted woodpecker, firecrest, goldcrest, chiffchaff, long-tailed tit, jay and common buzzard were all seen or heard.

Amongst the bluebells lay a little social history. We looked at the remains of what appeared to be a vintage truck, which was probably abandoned by a woodsman in the days when coppicing was much more widely practised. It's good to know that the revival of this management technique is returning the place to its former glory.

NEIL HULME,
BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION

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Main: Wood
spurge ©Tim Squire
Inset: Volunteers
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©Neil Hulme



CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

As I write this piece I am reminded of how vitally important this publication is. It is the only way we, as a disparate group of volunteers spread over many locations and differing tasks, can effectively communicate with each other. Indeed, during the detailed study into the future of the VRS Committee, led last year by Tony Mobbs, it became abundantly clear talking to volunteers and staff that Downland Thymes (DT) is an essential communication tool. It also provides the best platform for SDNPA staff to communicate policy and other matters to members of the VRS. Interestingly, as I meet with VRS members it isn't long before the subject of DT comes up and of how much it is appreciated by you all. Thus I will take this opportunity to thank the Communications and Engagement Team for their unswerving support in keeping DT the quality information publication that it is and also recognise the important part that Russell Cleaver, our volunteer member of the editorial team, plays in keeping it so interesting. Articles and photographs are always welcome.

In the meantime the VRS Committee and I are starting to make plans for the 2018 AGM, which is likely to be hosted by the Western Downs Area. Additionally, along with the SDNPA, we will be seeking your views on your volunteering experience through a repeat of the online survey that was conducted in 2012. We feel it is timely that we seek your views on what concerns you and seek to lay down the priorities for volunteers over the coming few years. Of specific interest to some of you I'm sure will be the next round of education courses that the Committee is organising, these are always very popular and, like the discounts that we have negotiated from retailers, are a tangible benefit that you can enjoy through VRS membership.

Finally, I'm pleased to tell you that the SDNPA have invited me to represent you all at the forthcoming National Parks UK Conference in October, which they are hosting and where the theme will be 'National Parks for the Future'. I will certainly try to promote the value that volunteers can bring to our National Parks and I also guess that it will mean me contributing a piece on it for the next DT!

RON WILDER, VRS CHAIRMAN

UPDATE FROM THE VOLUNTEERING TEAM

ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE HAS BEEN A BIG FOCUS OF ACTIVITY OVER THE GLORIOUS SUMMER MONTHS.

One of the emerging areas of focus in the Volunteering Development Plan is engaging the next generation in opportunities for volunteering within the South Downs National Park. This summer we have been delighted to engage young people in the work of volunteers through a variety of activities taking place across the National Park.

We have been delighted by the continued support of volunteers with the SDNPA events programme. This season volunteers have helped out at events in all areas of the National Park and beyond including the South Downs Green Fair, Community Rail Partnership in the City, Bignor Fete, Winchester Criterium and Cycle Fest and the Arun to Adur Farm Cluster. Our events are aimed at raising awareness of the National Park and its special qualities, and introducing new audiences to the work that we all do.

This year's water vole cycle included several tasks such as latrine surveys, mink raft checks and the latest round

of releases. This year, for the first time, volunteers and staff were joined by pupils from four local schools including Inwoods Small School, Droxford Junior School, West Meon School and Great Ballard School. The school children were captivated by the tasks and it was a brilliant way to introduce the next generation to this flagship project.

In another first, this summer we piloted a programme of volunteer activity days for 15–17 year olds taking part in the National Citizen Service – see page 14 to find out more about this national initiative to inspire youth action.

With so much great work going on we are looking forward to continuing to develop this important area of work as the Volunteering Development Plan takes shape. We will be asking for your feedback on proposals soon.

With best wishes,

AMANDA ELMES, SDNPA LEARNING, OUTREACH AND VOLUNTEER LEAD



Great Ballard School helping with the water vole release. © SDNPA

WHAT DO VOLUNTEERS ACTUALLY DO?



Volunteers hedgelaying and fencing. © Russell Cleaver

THIS IS A QUESTION OFTEN ASKED OF US VOLUNTEERS BY FRIENDS OR EVEN STRANGERS...

Well, to answer this question better than trying to remember what I've done over the last four months (always a problem when one is of advanced years) I thought I'd do a quick check of task programmes, as well as ask a few other volunteers in the South Downs what they've been engaged in. My study didn't start well as I found records of work varied considerably across the National Park. And it proved impossible to get accurate figures on the total days spent on individual tasks. But at least I did discover the sheer variety of tasks we get involved with. And it revealed a rough hierarchy of tasks, showing which ones were most frequently worked, down to those that were only occasionally encountered.

Top of the list, unsurprisingly, is 'scrub bashing', a long-time favourite for volunteers. This title covers a variety of jobs from weeding to felling trees (and involves getting stung and scratched!) But a quarter of tasks since January have involved such work.

Next came 'Rights of Way' – including South Downs Way tasks. Some 16% of tasks concerned such duties, either clearing paths or erecting steps or signs etc. Note that some areas (e.g. the west) did this more than others. The third most frequent task was a surprise, this is 'survey' work (12%). It covers a broad range of activities, from butterfly, bird or flower counts to access surveys etc. Ironically I know I have under-recorded surveys since this percentage only includes group tasks. For example, many bird, vole and river fly surveys are excluded as they are individually monitored. Last of the more regular tasks was 'fence and gate works' (10%), once again this was more evident in some areas than others (e.g. the east).

Of the more occasional tasks undertaken, 'woodland work' was probably infrequent due to the timing of this survey – had I undertaken this study in winter then this task would have been higher up the list. But elsewhere it has been fascinating to find out the remarkable variety of other duties pursued during the

spring and summer months. Some of us have been flint walling, while others have repaired dew ponds, built boardwalks, made owl boxes, laid hedges, planted cowslips or split stakes etc. Although some, no doubt, have been cursing over more unpleasant jobs like pulling out balsam and ragwort, or even picking up litter. But who said volunteering was easy?

As volunteers we can pick and choose what tasks to join, but in reality most of us turn up regularly to pursue whatever task is provided. Because, as I'm sure you know, what keeps us volunteering is not so much the task but the comradeship, the banter, and the sense of achievement working in a National Park. So, our quick answer to "what do volunteers actually do", is – we have fun.

RUSSELL CLEAVER, WESTERN DOWNS VOLUNTEER RANGER

THE PARC NATUREL DES PYRÉNÉES ARIÉGEOISES

WE HAVE JUST RETURNED FROM THREE WEEKS IN THE ARIÈGE, AN AREA OF FRANCE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE PYRENEES.

It experiences a mix of weather which sometimes reflects the influence of the Atlantic and sometimes that of the Mediterranean. Concern in the area is that the climate is becoming hotter and drier.

We arranged with the South Downs VRS to study differences and similarities between our National Park and the Parc Naturel des Pyrénées (PNR) Ariégeoises. This article is intended to be a brief initial impression on arriving back home.

The PNR Ariégeoises came into being in 2008 when the local communes asked the French Government for funding to set up a Parc Naturel. The government agreed as the Ariège is an area of great beauty and considerable cultural interest. There are a number of Parcs Naturels in France which are controlled by 'Syndicat Mixtes'. A Syndicat Mixte is a meeting of representatives of all the Communes involved, representatives of Regional Government and representatives of National Government. Using their funds they employ a professional group with experience of work in biodiversity and cultural activities. We met with the Director of this professional group and he stated, "We are only as good as the advice we offer". The Director does not manage the Parc but advises the Syndicat Mixte which manages the Parc. Central and Local Government retain planning powers.

The Parc Naturel covers 2.6 thousand square kilometres and has a population of 43,500 (compared to the South Downs National Park (SDNP) which covers 1.5 thousand square kilometres and has a population of 112,500). The Parc is large, wild and beautiful.

There are large areas of upland grassland growing in relatively hot, dry conditions. In the foothills there are limestone outcrops where the vegetation has

remarkable similarities to our own Downland. In the High Pyrenees the grassland is not growing on limestone. In both areas farming has experienced a process of reduction over a long period because of epidemics, World Wars and the attraction of work in successful industrial centres such as Toulouse. The old levels of grazing by sheep and cattle have not been maintained and as a result grassland is giving way to the growth of scrub, often juniper. The growth of scrub is a familiar event to us all and efforts are being made by communes to cut back the scrub.

It is hoped that it will be possible to attract more people to take up the tough mountain life. Dare one say the tough but romantic mountain life! Part of the process of supporting this move is to organise festivals at the time when the sheep and cattle are driven to the higher pastures in early June. At these festivals of 'Transhumance', as the annual move to higher pastures is called, visitors and local people join the farmers in their journey to the hills where local food and wine is provided.

Biodiversity activities cover a wide range and cannot be fully covered here, but the more spectacular aspects are the re-introduction of the bear and the ibex (populations completely destroyed by hunting in the last century). We were informed by local people that wolves are migrating into the Pyrenees from Eastern Europe.

Other fascinating but threatened animal species are the 'rat trompette', a small aquatic mammal with a nose like a trumpet, and species of reptile and amphibian, le lézard ocelle and



the europocte. These creatures are vulnerable to human activity. Programmes of protection under the Europe wide programme Natura 2000 are in place, similar to the SDNP. Orchid species abound, some alpine species are threatened and steps to protect them are in place, while gentian species give colour to the hills.

Supporting local culture in terms of art, music, food and wine is a large and important part of the activities of the communes of the Parc. A striking and famous example of local culture is found in limestone caves where the activities of our ancestors carried out upto 30,000 years ago are preserved in the form of paintings, remains of food preparation, painted stone ornaments and remains of fires. The cave paintings are well known and of vital importance not just to the local culture but to world culture.

Such are our impressions. We plan to return to the Pyrenees and have made links with local volunteers which we hope to develop over the coming months. Our thanks go to the VRS for offering us a grant which supported our travel into the wilder regions of the PNR Ariégeoises.

BRIAN AND JOAN WIGNALL, EASTERN DOWNS VOLUNTEER RANGERS

**Background: Port de l'Hers
Inset: Cave at Mas d'Azil**

© Brian and Joan Wignall

STUCK IN THE MUD

LAST SPRING WE WERE AT ASHFORD HANGERS, WHERE THE TREE-LINED HANGERS SIT ON A CLAY CAPPED, SCARP SLOPE OF CHALK, MAKING FOR A SLIPPERY COMBINATION AT THE BEST OF TIMES.

© Russell Cleaver

So, to reach our work site we inched our way carefully down a narrow access track in two vehicles. However, John, our driver, then said "I'll just go down another 50 metres to unload". Big mistake number one.

We arrived okay and carried out much of our allotted task. But when John said he'd better turn the landrover around to prepare for an exit, the problems began – first the wheels began to slip, then slide... Halfway round and spinning on all wheels John strove to reverse uphill, but every time he took his foot off the gas the landrover merely slid forward towards the edge of doom; the track was cut into the side of a dramatic drop.

It was when one wheel was teetering over the brink, in mid-air, that we began to worry.

Never fear, we thought, we have another vehicle to tow us out, or so we thought.

I gently manoeuvred the Toyota down the sloping track; big mistake number two. The

tyres immediately filled with mud and started slipping. Now we had two vehicles in trouble and a party of anxious volunteers. With spades and hand-tools surely we could dig our way out of trouble?

Have you ever tried to push a two-tonne vehicle out of mud, uphill? Let alone two?

After an hour or more of muddy graft, we'd got the land rover round and fully back on the track – but no further. It was time to call for reinforcements. But where was the cavalry?

I knew they were located at the bottom of the hangers, in the shape of a local farmer with his tractor. But were they available? It took a lonely trudge downhill to sheepishly admit our folly.

Simon the farmer was all sympathy, but sadly he couldn't leave at present (groan). Nevertheless, he said his Polish tractor driver would get us out (hooray). Except he couldn't

speak a word of English... which made for an interesting conversation in pidgin English and sign language as I sat beside him while we chugged back uphill.

When we arrived at the hilltop the rest of the team had managed to dig the Toyota out, but the land rover was too far down to move. Not for much longer though as the tractor was made for such challenges. A chain was linked to the land rover's tow bar and, like extracting a tooth, the tractor pulled the vehicle straight out and up to safety. After big smiles and shaking of hands our driver disappeared as quickly as he came. I rewarded him later with tins of beer but I learnt one thing for sure – if you ever get stuck in the mud, use a tractor and a big Pole to get out.

RUSSELL CLEAVER, WESTERN DOWNS VOLUNTEER RANGER



WEST MEON NATURE STATION



Main: Opening day
Inset: Finn Canaway accepting his prize.
Both images © Martin Cowell

IN THE SPRING EDITION OF DOWNLAND THYMES WE HIGHLIGHTED A CHILDREN’S NATURE RESERVE BEING CREATED IN WEST MEON. HERE WE INCLUDE A LETTER WRITTEN BY THE LOCAL HEADTEACHER CONCERNING ITS SUCCESSFUL LAUNCH.

“At the old West Meon station site on Tuesday 25 July, the staff and schoolchildren from West Meon Primary School met with residents, volunteers and representatives from Hampshire County Council and the South Downs National Park, to mark the official opening of a wonderful new children’s nature reserve.

For this opening, a children’s competition had been run at the School to select an appropriate name for the site and at this ceremony Finn Canaway, a child at the school, was presented with a prize for suggesting the winning title: The “West Meon Nature Station”. It proved a delightful day when we

could all celebrate the transformation of a once neglected depot into a varied habitat of trees and wildflowers that now attracts an abundance of insects and birdlife, as well as offering a fascinating, safe environment for children to come and study.

I thank Hampshire County Council’s Countryside Service for making this site available for this new educational facility. I particularly want to express my appreciation to all the volunteers of the South Downs National Park VRS; for not only spending many days in clearing the site and improving its value to wildlife; but for also assisting me to secure £3000 grant aid to fund this project.”

JULIE KELLY, HEADTEACHER OF WEST MEON C.E. PRIMARY SCHOOL

DANCING & SINGING, IT’S NOT CRICKET!



ON SUNDAY THE 9 JULY, A CELEBRATION OF THE 300TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FIRST CRICKET MATCH ON ALLEGEDLY THE 3RD OLDEST CRICKET GROUND IN THE WORLD, TOOK PLACE OUTSIDE THE IMPRESSIVE ELIZABETHAN MANSION OF DANNY HOUSE, IN THE GROUNDS OF DANNY PARK, HURSTPIERPOINT.

Richard Burrows arranged a friendly cricket match between the Danny Park residents and the Hurstpierpoint Village Cricket team.

It was a great free day, full of fun, with Chanctonbury Morris dancing and the South Downs Folk Singers offering their singing of local folk songs, some from the same period. Ale flowed, spit roasted lambs were gnawed and the onlookers were treated to an exciting somewhat unconventional cricket match, with those dropping the ball sent to the stocks for a good soaking!

Unlike the fashion of the 18th century the ladies and maidens taking part

relied not on thick powder with a considerable lead content, to keep their skin milky white, and thereby shorten their lives, but the new fangled factor 50 sunscreen which allowed a safe beauteous glow to suffuse their visages.

It was also pretty dangerous in their immediate vicinity as they appeared to be trying to emulate the recent success of our national women’s team with serious abandon, and especially for some unaccountable reason after lunch. This phenomenon also at times affected the accuracy of the gentlemen taking part and their utterances.

JOHN CRANE, CULTURAL HERITAGE VOLUNTEER RANGER.



All images
© David Broadhead
& Damon Hart

MY SPECIAL SPOT



ALAN JONES TELLS US ABOUT HIS FAVOURITE PLACE IN THE SOUTH DOWNS AND WHAT IT MEANS TO HIM...

My Special Spot is the view at Birling Gap: you walk away from the Gap for about 200 yards then, as you rise, you look back west to the Seven Sisters and it's the sheer scale of the sight that greets you. Where sea meets the chalk cliffs and the sky, it can take your breath away. Mind you, you must pick the right time to get away from the crowds. I find a late afternoon in spring can be perfect.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE EFFECT THIS VIEW HAS UPON YOU?

Well it depends on your timing. The weather can be very dramatic, it's the coming together of the wind, clouds, cliffs, and tides. On a quiet day it is very calming and you get a sense of order about the place, all is well with the world. But when the weather is wild it is very different – you can feel the power of nature. Erosion of the cliffs is very evident; the sea has already taken some terraced houses from here and it's only a matter of time before it takes more. The sea is going to win in the end, nothing in this world is forever.

DOES THIS SPECIAL SPOT EPITOMISE SOMETHING ABOUT THE NATIONAL PARK?

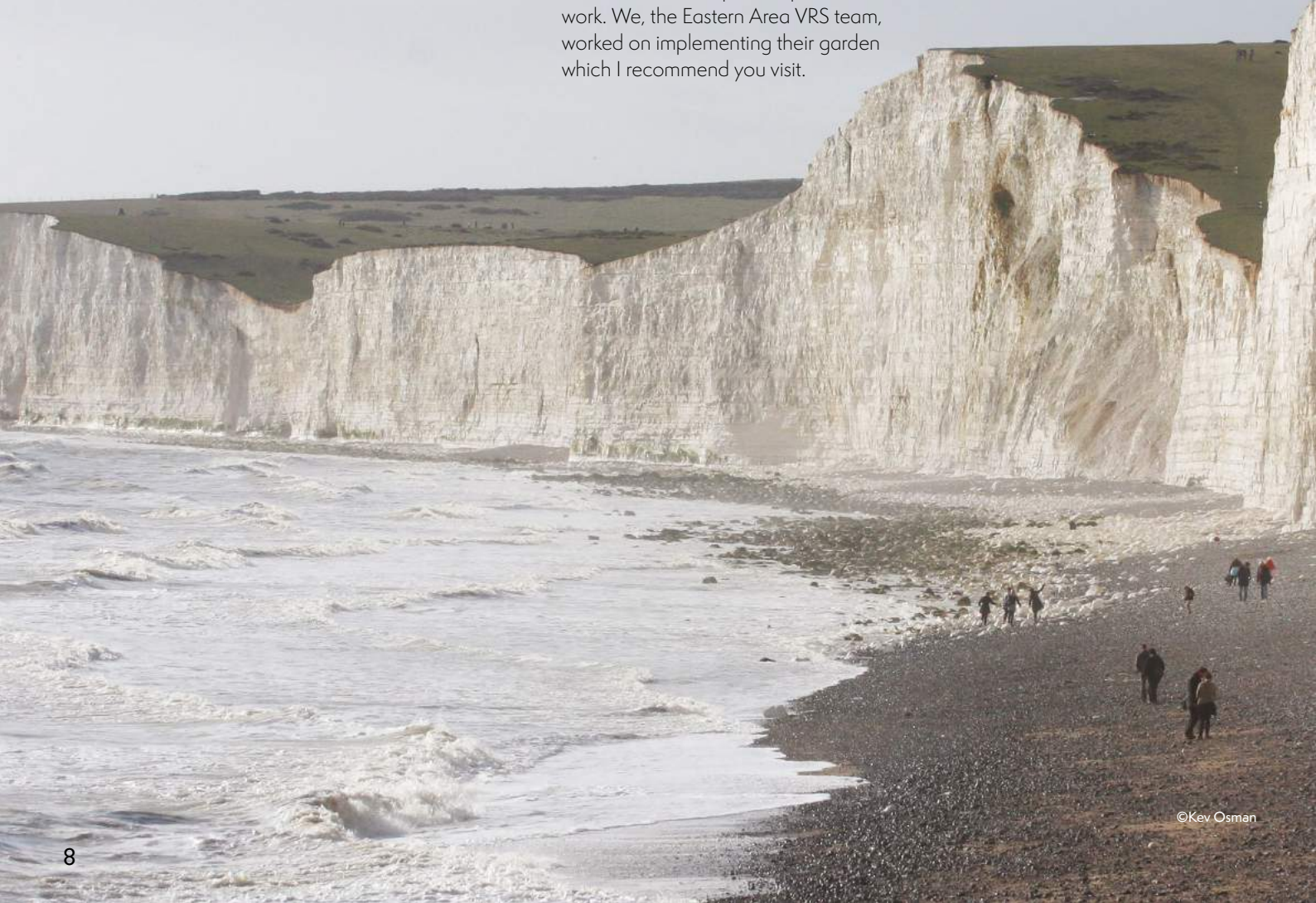
The chalk cliffs, their scale and whiteness epitomises something very English. It does make me think that this is the best of English countryside, our green and pleasant land. Furthermore, in terms of public interpretation, there is a good example of best practise locally. I think The National Trust Visitor Centre at Birling Gap does an excellent job of explaining the ecology of chalk downland and the forces of erosion at work. We, the Eastern Area VRS team, worked on implementing their garden which I recommend you visit.

IS THERE ANY SPECIFIC OCCASION OR INCIDENT THAT STICKS IN YOUR MIND CONCERNING YOUR SPECIAL SPOT?

Some years ago, I walked from Lewes to Eastbourne along the South Downs Way in one day. By the time I got to Birling Gap I was exhausted and the thought of another 3.5 miles, much of it uphill, was discouraging. But it was early evening, the sun was setting and the sky was a glorious red. I stopped and sat at my favourite spot for almost 30 minutes. This gave me all the enthusiasm, energy and motivation to crack on as fast as I could go and I finished in high spirits.

I've been volunteering in the South Downs for ten years now and am also a South Downs Warden for the final 4 miles of the South Downs Way. A friend first encouraged me to join the VRS – it sounded like a good way to use up my spare time (and would keep me from spending money!), so I joined. Since then I've enjoyed companionship and a lot of fun and good times. That's what the VRS brings you.

ALAN JONES, EASTERN AREA VOLUNTEER AND SOUTH DOWNS WAY WARDEN



©Kev Osman

A TRIBUTE TO DAVID ELLIS



I've been out on task with David in rain, balmy heat and even snow. Whatever the weather he would always turn up on time and give it his all regardless of what job we had in store.

He was a wildlife enthusiast with a keen eye for birds and never failed to spot raptors and other species of interest flying over, taking some wonderful photographs of them during his many years working on the South Downs.

He was quite a quiet chap but extremely knowledgeable on a broad range of subjects if you got him talking, and he clearly loved and enjoyed working in this beautiful area. I know he will be sorely missed by his friends from the Tuesday group and all the different Rangers he worked with here in the National Park.

FAY PATTINSON, SDNPA EASTERN DOWNS RANGER



One thing about David was that he turned up for most tasks whatever the weather. In fact he wrote a short article (with photographs) headed 'Working in the Snow'see *Downland Thymes* Issue 67, Spring 2015, page 7.

Photography was another of his hobbies. Just a few months after he started with the VRS, he won a 'Winter Scene' competition for a photo in *Downland Thymes*. I don't know what edition this was in, but I remember speaking to him about the photo at the Christmas bash at the Ram Inn in Firle (Dec 2013).

As I said, photography was his hobby, and at the task at Bishopstone on 29 November 2016, he took these remarkable photos (see image) of a kestrel which he referred to as the Bishopstone kestrel.

One of his final photos is of a green winged orchid when doing an orchid survey task in May this year at one of South East Water's underground reservoirs. It illustrates his variety of photography subjects.

IAN WILDRIDGE, EASTERN DOWNS VOLUNTEER RANGER



David was a very quiet, but enthusiastic and hardworking member of our team. At lunchtimes he would sometimes sit apart from the rest of us, writing in his note book. We never knew what he was writing; it could have been a record of the birds he had seen, or, I sometimes wondered if it could have been a record of his fellow volunteer's idiosyncrasies! The sensible side of me guessed it was probably the former as David was a font of knowledge when it came to recognising birds. He also had considered opinions on a variety of subjects from politics to media, which he occasionally shared. We will miss him.

JOSIE HOBBS, EASTERN DOWNS VOLUNTEER RANGER

From Left: David Ellis standing © Fay Pattinson • Bishopstone kestrel © David Ellis • Piddinghoe green winged orchid © David Ellis

PROTECTING BIRLING GAP



The commissioned sign.

THE FIGHT THAT LOCAL AUTHORITIES PUT UP IN ORDER TO PROTECT THE SOUTH DOWNS FROM RAMPANT DEVELOPMENT IS WELL KNOWN. BUT THEY WERE PRECEDED BY ONE MAN WHO CARRIED OUT HIS OWN RESISTANCE TO PLANS TO BUILD HOUSES FROM BIRLING GAP OVER THE SEVEN SISTERS ALONG “THE NEW COAST ROAD”.

WHO WAS THAT MAN? HOW DID HE DO IT? AND HOW DO WE KNOW TODAY?

Harry Llewelyn Davies, “Great Uncle Harry” as his descendants call him, the Managing Director of a Scottish Engineering Company, enjoyed holidays on the South Coast and was particularly fond of Birling Gap. When, after the Great War, he saw that building had started, he bought seven building plots which blocked the advance of the planned New Coast Road. This act probably saved Went Hill and may have discouraged the general development along the East Dean and Beachy Head Road.

To reinforce his obstruction, Harry planted a small pine plantation across the route of the planned coast road which stands today as an emblem of what one man can do.

Sadly Harry died, barely five months after his final purchase, and was buried in East Dean churchyard.

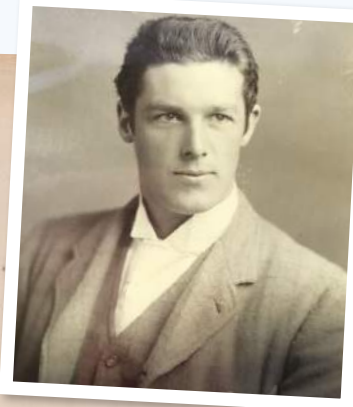
After Harry died in 1923, his widow Agnes entered into a legal agreement with the then Hailsham Rural District Council to declare that her land would remain for ever “a private open space” and would never be developed. She also passed some cliff edge land to the National Trust to maintain the coastal path against erosion.

Today Harry and Agnes’ house is occupied by their descendants Mary and Michael Mordaunt who have continued to protect the Right of Way that crossed their land. When the coastal path had to be moved inland due to cliff falls they created a more northerly path through their land and even commissioned a sign to show people the new route. For over fifty years Michael has mown this path and cut back the scrub to maintain access, a job now carried out by SDNP volunteers. Today Mary and Michael are looking forward to the next era – the England Coast Path – and will be cooperating with Natural England whose “path principles” might lead to another chapter in this tale of the struggle to keep parts of the South Downs open to all, but protected from ribbon development.

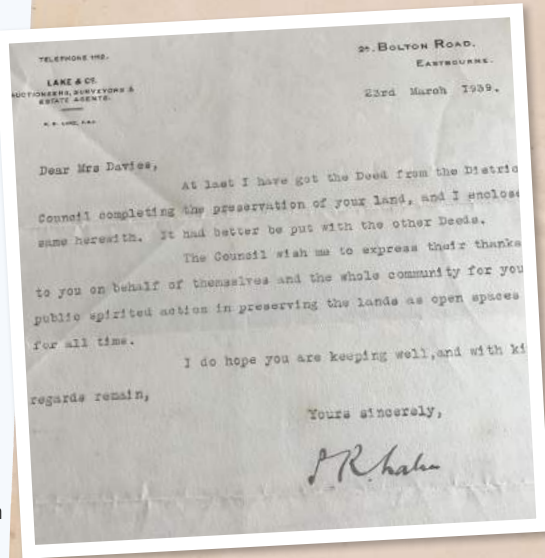
AND HOW DO I KNOW ALL THIS?

In my role as voluntary warden on the Seven Sisters SDW footpath, I got chatting to a man I met who was busy with shears doing what was really my responsibility – keeping the way open. His tale was so absorbing that I promised that one day I would try to record the part Michael’s Great Uncle Harry played in the preservation of this SSSI and iconic beauty spot.

JENNY WISTREICH, SEVEN SISTERS SOUTH DOWNS WAY WARDEN



A young Harry



Agnes’s agreement with Hailsham Rural District Council



PIC IN THE PARK

JUST A FEW STEPS OFF THE SOUTH DOWNS WAY, NEAR THE TOP OF TRULEIGH HILL, ABOVE SHOREHAM, IS A RATHER TOUCHING MEMORIAL TO SOME FAMILY PETS.

Almost hidden by undergrowth are two small gravestones; the largest states: “In memory of Wee Tibby died 14 Jan 1932”, and below, “Wee Tiny died 26 June 1932”. The smaller stone reads; “Beloved Dylan faithful friend 14.1.90”.

Probably thousands of walkers pass alongside on the South Downs Way every year and never notice these headstones, they are a very British symbol of our fondness for animals.



DID YOU KNOW?

SOME PARTS OF SUSSEX WERE ONCE OFFICIALLY DETACHED PARTS OF HAMPSHIRE.

In the 19th Century, Rogate, North and South Ambersham were all such exclaves, in that they were Hampshire land, surrounded by foreign territory, namely Sussex. Indeed, the latter two tithings both belonged to the parish of Steep, some 11 miles away. This wasn’t as unusual as it sounds as other similar irregularities existed throughout England until an 1844 Act of Parliament resolved many issues. Even so, some blocks of land in Gloucestershire and Flintshire remained detached until late in the 20th Century when new legislation had to be passed to allow them to be transferred to their most logical counties.

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.



BAT & BALL, HAMBLEDON, HANTS PO8 0UB

The Bat & Ball is an unpretentious inn which is probably more well known to Australians, who beat a path to its door, than it is to many residents in the South Downs.

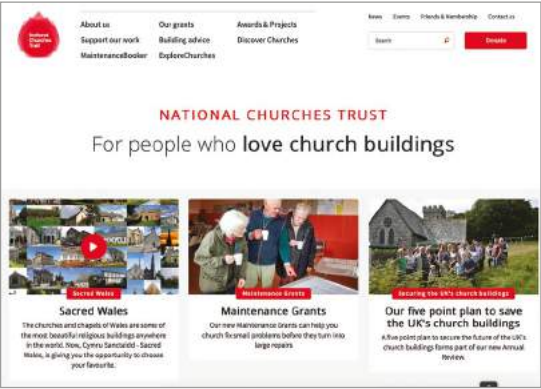
For this pub is adjacent to the hallowed cricket ground at Hambledon that is renowned as the 'Cradle of Cricket', where games have been fought over ever since the 1760s. A huge granite monument to the birth of the modern game stands close by

and, as you might expect, the interior of the pub is dominated by cricketing memorabilia. But otherwise the pub retains its quiet, unassuming atmosphere. Its food and ale are similarly modest but the pub is worth a visit for its cricketing heritage alone.

We've had a couple of Hampshire traditional inn awards recently so if you know any pubs in the eastern end of the National Park which are worth mentioning please send us details.

WEBSITE REVIEW

nationalchurchestrust.org



For those of you interested in cultural heritage, this national website is well worth browsing to find interesting churches to visit. As many will know there are a host of historic churches in the South Downs, but this attractive website avoids simply publishing lists, it groups churches with similar characteristics and picks out idiosyncratic features e.g. 'wooden churches'. Currently they've asked Bill Bryson to nominate his favourite fifteen churches, and two of these are in the South Downs.

So, go to this website and when it opens, click on 'Explore Churches', then away you go.

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.

A COUPLE OF JOKES COURTESY OF VOLUNTEER CRIS SAVILL

THE ALMOND DAIQUIRI.

Doctor Jones likes to stop at a bar after work & enjoy an almond daiquiri. One day, Dick the barman runs out of almonds & uses hickory nuts instead. The Doctor takes a sip & says "Is this an almond daiquiri, Dick?"

And Dick says, "It's a hickory daiquiri, Doc."

LOCAL NEWS.

And on the local TV news Chichester Harbour AONB has just confirmed in their management plan where mice park their boats. *It's at the Hickory Dickory Dock.*

CAPTION COMPETITION

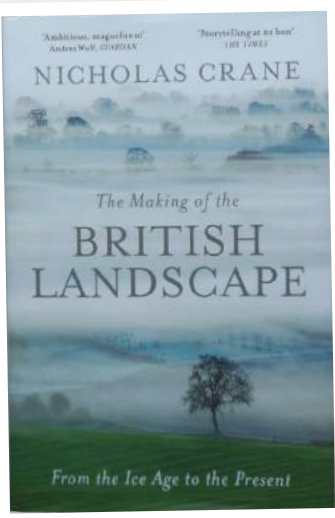
CAN YOU CREATE A WITTY CAPTION FOR THIS PHOTOGRAPH? EMAIL YOUR IDEAS TO DT@SOUTHDOWNSGOV.UK



The winner of last edition's caption competition was...
"YOU MIGHT AT LEAST HAVE WAITED UNTIL I WAS ON THE GROUND BEFORE YOU CUT THE TREES DOWN!."
ALASTAIR STEWART, WESTERN DOWNS VOLUNTEER RANGER



BOOK REVIEW *The Making of the British Landscape, Nicholas Crane* Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £20.00



Every so often a respected author writes a book describing how the British landscape has evolved. In the 1950s W.G. Hoskins published the classic original book with this title. Then in 1986 Oliver Rackham released *The History of the Countryside* (my own favourite), which took a more ecological view. About a decade ago, Francis Pryor (of *Time Team* fame) updated Hoskins's theme, using the same title but seen with an archaeologist's view. Now it is Nicholas Crane's turn, again using Hoskins's title. And, as in all these books, it is another impressive tome. This time it is a geographer's vision of how Britain developed.

Crane is well known as the presenter of TV's *Coast*. But until now I didn't know he was also the president of the Royal Geographical Society. So he knows his stuff, and being a good communicator he writes vividly. He gives us a people-centred approach, whether in pre-history or in the more recent past, and he describes how climate change has influenced population growth. It is a remarkable story well told – but annoyingly, when I wanted to check some facts, he gives us no footnotes. Nor are there any maps (surely a sin for a geographer?). But his bibliography is impressive.



NATIONAL CITIZEN SERVICE

CONNECTING YOUNG PEOPLE WITH NATURE IS A KEY PART OF THE DEFRA 8-POINT PLAN FOR NATIONAL PARKS. ALONG WITH ALL OTHER ENGLISH NATIONAL PARKS, THE SOUTH DOWNS HAS A TARGET TO DOUBLE THE NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE EXPERIENCING A NATIONAL PARK AS PART OF NATIONAL CITIZEN SERVICE (NCS). SO WHAT IS THIS ALL ABOUT?

The National Citizen Service (NCS) was established by the Government and is now in its fifth year. The programme aims to:

- Engage 15–17 year olds across the UK
- Develop the skills that employers increasingly value, including confidence, leadership and independence
- Link to social action projects
- Motivate young people to long term engagement in volunteering

NCS achieves this through a four week programme where young people work in groups of 12–15 to undertake three strands:

- **Adventure** – a week’s residential in an activity centre trying out new activities and teambuilding.
- **Skills** – a week’s residential developing life skills to boost CV or UCAS personal statement.

- **Social action** – plan, fundraise and make difference over five days of activity.

This summer we piloted three sessions in the Western Area with the main provider of NCS in Hampshire, Mountbatten School. The aim was to test how best we can engage with this scheme to encourage more young people to volunteer within the National Park.

The young people were recruited from a wide geographical area and many of them did not know anyone in their groups until their NCS activity week. A total of 32 young people (15–17) and five leaders (themselves young people aged 18–19) participated in the three days at Stodham Copse, near Petersfield. Supervised by the Western Area Rangers and our Education colleagues Amanda Elmes and Jonathan Dean, the groups were introduced to the special qualities of the National Park and the River Rother in particular. They spent the day working in teams to pull invasive Himalayan Balsam along the river bank as well as taking part in a variety of other activities



from skull identification and water vole true or false games, to identifying river-flies and matching animal tracks and signs.

For most of the young people this was their first experience of a conservation task and they certainly learnt a lot about this part of the Downs as well as the minutiae of Himalayan Balsam!

CHARLOTTE WRAY, WESTERN DOWNS
ASSISTANT RANGER

Main: Posing in the woods.
Inset: Getting stuck in.
Both images © Amanda Elmes

NEW HIDDEN LANDSCAPE TRAILS

COME AND EXPLORE THE HIDDEN HISTORY OF STANSTED PARK, THE TRUNDLE AND KINGLEY VALE WITH OUR BRAND NEW HIDDEN LANDSCAPE TRAILS.

Beneath the ancient woodland of the South Downs National Park lies a secret landscape littered with traces of the people who have lived, visited and worked here.

The woods have protected this hidden landscape with features unseen and unknown for years, even by the frequent visitor. However, recent research, including ground

breaking LIDAR data, carried out by the Heritage Lottery Funded project Secrets of the High Woods has revealed these treasures and some of the stories behind them. You can now explore some of these

findings using our new Hidden Landscape Trails.

Download your copy from southdowns.gov.uk/walking

DISCOUNTS FOR VOLUNTEERS

You’ll be pleased to know that several retailers are offering discounts on the sorts of things you’ll need in the countryside. The VRS has successfully negotiated discounts with: **Blacks, Cotswold Outdoor, Cycle Surgery, Millets, Runners Need, Snow+Rock and Ultimate Outdoors**. Simply present your

VRS photo identity card at the time of your purchase – or use an online discount code. The discount amount varies, but is not available in conjunction with any other discounts or offers and is subject to terms and conditions.

Please visit the Volunteer section of the intranet for full details.

If you don’t have an ID card, or have lost, damaged or mislaid it then please email VRS@southdowns.gov.uk for a replacement. The weekly *Update* email includes an intranet log-on that you can use if you don’t already have one.

STILE RENEWAL AT CROWLINK

ON SUNDAY 4 JUNE, SIX VOLUNTEER RANGERS ASSEMBLED AT THE SEVEN SISTERS COUNTRY PARK TO UNDERTAKE, ACCORDING TO THE ROTA, RIGHTS OF WAY WORK.

We were met by the National Trust Ranger, Adrian Harrison, who explained we would be replacing a stile – so far so good and all to plan! However, there were two small spanners thrown into the works, namely one, the stile was on a steep slope and two, it was to be constructed from scratch using chestnut posts and cross beams using mortice and tenon joints, rather than the more usual half butt joints and bolts.

By chance we had a carpenter in the group, so once the old stile was removed, he was able to employ his skills in kicking us off on measuring, marking, sawing and chiselling the joints required to hold the structure together. Due to the steep slope, the old stile had an additional step on the downside and we replicated the notch and post arrangement on the new stile.

We hope you agree from the pictures that the end result of the stile and additional step looks very pleasing to the eye. Adrian gave a very impressive thumbs up as the job concluded.

RICHARD BOSWORTH, EASTERN DOWNS VOLUNTEER RANGER

IN PROGRESS...



THE END RESULT



Top: Aled Evans and John Pollard busy crafting the mortice and tenon joints.

Bottom: The end result, as per the National Trust's requirements. Both images © Richard Bosworth

**SOUTH DOWNS
VOLUNTEER
RANGER SERVICE**

**SOUTH DOWNS
NATIONAL PARK**

Downland Thymes: News for the South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service. Issue 77, August 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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