

# DOWNLAND THYMES

NEWS FOR THE SOUTH DOWNS VOLUNTEER  
RANGER SERVICE ISSUE 74 | WINTER 2016

## VOLUNTEERS RESURRECT LOCAL WILDLIFE SITE



THE SOUTH DOWNS VOLUNTEER RANGER SERVICE ASSISTED LEAD RANGER PHILLIPPA MORRISON-PRICE AND ASSISTANT RANGER TIM SQUIRE IN BRINGING AN IMPORTANT CHALK GRASSLAND SITE NORTH OF BRIGHTON IN THE EASTERN DOWNS BACK IN TO MANAGEMENT.

This south-facing chalk grassland bank, (something we don't have much of in the South Downs), had suffered from years of neglect.

Volunteers from American Express also came out to help the team cut down the invasive hawthorn trees and have a burn up, and the farmer pitched in with large-scale heavy duty clearance of the scrub at the bottom of the bank. This

may look a bit shocking at first, but the intention is to remove the boundary of scrub to facilitate sheep grazing by encouraging them up the hill.

While out on site Tim Squire spotted a brown hairstreak butterfly – a priority species. This elusive butterfly spends most of its time in the high canopy of ash trees, the females only venturing down to lay their eggs on

young blackthorn shoots. A site visit with Butterfly Conservation has been arranged and it's hoped that some further management of the blackthorn (coppice rotation) will encourage the population to flourish. The next steps are to flail the grassland and follow up with sheep so watch this space!

PHILLIPPA MORRISON-PRICE,  
EASTERN DOWNS LEAD RANGER

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Main: The team  
taking a break

Left: Before the  
hard work

Right: After!

© Philippa  
Morrison-Price





CHAIRMAN’S CORNER

How quickly time flies when you are out and about in beautiful weather working hard and having fun as a volunteer ranger. So it is hard to believe that the Christmas festivities are nearly upon us once more.

I was again most fortunate to be able to participate for three days in the final 2016 release of a further 205 water voles on the river Meon (2133 released to date). The weather was perfect, the river at its best and the enthusiasm infectious. Helpers came from many sources, such as the Hampshire Wildlife Trust, the Environment Agency, a strong representation from SDNPA staff and a very supportive landowner. Opportunities will be open for any volunteer rangers to participate in the 2017 release, you won’t be disappointed!

One of the final events of the year which the SDNPA support was the Blackmoor Apple Day in Hampshire. Beautiful weather, packed public attendance and a vast array of apples and pears to sample. The busy SDNPA stand received great overall interest from the public with walking and cycling leaflets, in particular, in strong demand plus numerous enquiries on volunteering. An unexpected role was the hectic hour spent cutting slices of Conference and Delsanne pears on one of many “taster” stands, one of which the SDNPA agreed to support. I have never cut up so many pears in my life!

Finally, my thanks to Central Downs committee member, Helena Lewis, for all the work she has done in finding a great venue for the next VRS AGM. I hope that its location will encourage a good cross-section of volunteers to attend.

Wishing you and your families a very Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

NEVILL BROOKE, VRS CHAIRMAN

NEXT AGM:  
Saturday 25 March 2017  
at Wiston Village Hall.

UPDATE FROM THE VRS TEAM



OVER THE LAST FEW MONTHS, TEMPORARY VOLUNTEER SUPPORT OFFICER GEMMA NORTH HAS BEEN JOINING MANY OF YOU ON TASK DAYS TO LEARN ABOUT THE VARIETY OF WORK GOING ON ACROSS THE NATIONAL PARK.

Over the last two or three years we’ve talked to lots of people, including Volunteer Rangers, about how the SDNPA should support and develop volunteering. All the feedback from this work has told us that we should be encouraging and helping more people to get involved in looking after the National Park, both as volunteer rangers and as volunteers with other organisations and groups.

There are a number of different ways to approach this. We should make sure that more people know about what is going on already, but we also need to find other opportunities that might appeal to people who currently choose not to join in with the work that we and other organisations already do.

There are many things we could try, but we couldn’t do them all and they wouldn’t all work anyway. That’s why I am working with colleagues (and also with the VRS Committee) to create a ‘Volunteer Development Plan’ for the Authority. This plan will lay out what we will do over the next three years from March next year. I’ve had a meeting with one of the Area teams already and will be doing the same with the others over the next month or so. The first meeting threw up some really interesting ideas on how we can diversify the range of work that people can support and also broaden the range of people who are able/choose to

lend a hand. Examples include opportunities for whole families to spend some time doing practical conservation, tasks with students on school grounds, recording short videos for YouTube and/or the South Downs website of volunteers talking about your work. There will be more meetings and more ideas, which we will then prioritise and agree which to take forward.

The restructure of the Authority offered the opportunity for more Assistant Rangers to be recruited to Area teams, part of whose role will be to support and work with local volunteer rangers. In the Eastern Downs the new post was filled by the transfer of Tim Squire; the other Areas should be close to completing recruitment by the time you read this. Some changes in responsibility between the Volunteer Support Officer and Area teams will follow, most likely around clothing and training for Volunteer Rangers. We’ll let you know what is going to change and when shortly.

As always, thanks for all your help and have a great Christmas and New Year.

IAN HARTLE, SDNPA VOLUNTEER DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

Above: Gemma North with Western Downs VRs John Walton, Ron Wilder, Russell Cleaver, Bruce Hart, John Watson and a newly installed interpretation panel on the Meon Valley Trail. © Nevill Brooke

VRS – A CASE STUDY FOR VOLUNTEERING

SAM CAME TO THE VRS THROUGH VOLUNTEER CENTRE EAST SUSSEX. SHE AGREED TO WRITE A SHORT CASE STUDY FOR THEM ON HER EXPERIENCE, WHICH TURNS OUT TO BE AN IDEAL STORY FOR DOWNLAND THYMES TOO...

Hi, my name is Sam Rush, I’m 31 and I’m a Volunteer Ranger with the South Downs National Park. I started volunteering generally in November last year. Initially it was entirely selfish; I wanted to go to a film festival and it gave me the opportunity to see lots of films for free! But then from there I realised there were lots of other cultural things I could get involved in too. I hadn’t had a good year and was recovering from a traumatic event, so putting time into voluntary work was really about being able to concentrate on the things that made me feel good about myself and also to help me regain some of the confidence I’d lost along the way. By the time Brenda at the Volunteer Centre East Sussex put me in touch with the South Downs National Park I’d already suspected that my day job wasn’t helping me to recover and I subsequently took voluntary redundancy in May.

I’ve now been volunteering regularly as a Volunteer Ranger from Stanmer since July and I haven’t looked back. I try and go out once a week and I really miss it if I can’t! I’d do it every day if I could but unfortunately being able to earn money is a barrier. I took a part time job with flexible hours which covers the essentials and even though I don’t have anything like the income I used to, I’m so much happier being able to do things that I find so fulfilling. I’m no longer working to be able to do the things that make me happy – I’m just doing them, whenever I want to. I’d like to seek paid work in this area eventually, but it’s very competitive and you need to gain a lot of experience;

volunteering regularly allows me to do this and gives me something really worthwhile to look forward to each week.

The work itself is really varied and changes depending on the season. When I started it was summer, so the tasks were things like fencing and clearing footpaths. Now we’re getting into autumn and winter we can do more scrub clearance to prepare habitats for wildlife like nesting birds and butterflies to return in spring. We also get to learn really interesting traditional skills like coppicing, flint walling and scything. It’s immensely satisfying – you have a task for the day and by the end of it you’ve achieved something tangible. We work really hard but it’s a lovely group of people that come along, often people who’ve been coming for many years, so when we sit down for a well-earned tea break it’s a great atmosphere and we all get on well.

I couldn’t recommend volunteering to people enough. Even if it isn’t the start of a career change, it’s so important to recognise what you do in life that makes you feel truly satisfied, whether it’s helping others or supporting the arts or being outdoors. I feel so lucky now to be in a position that I have these things to look forward to each week and when I look back on how low I was a year ago I feel like a completely different person. I can’t put a value on that.

SAM RUSH, EASTERN DOWNS VOLUNTEER RANGER

Right: Sam repairing a wall © SDNPA





# ARE VOLUNTEERS UNDER REVIEW?

"THERE SEEMS TO BE QUITE A HIGH LEVEL OF SATISFACTION WITH THE EFFORTS OF THE COMMITTEE TO KEEP VOLUNTEERS INFORMED OF ITS WORK WITH 77% CONFIRMING THAT THEY THOUGHT THE COMMITTEE WAS VERY, OR FAIRLY, EFFECTIVE IN THIS REGARD"

## WELL NO... BUT WE HAVE GOT THE FEEDBACK ON A RECENT VRS COMMITTEE SURVEY WHICH FELLOW VOLUNTEERS HAVE UNDERTAKEN.

You may recall from reading previous editions of the Downland Thymes that a Review Group has been established to evaluate the way our Committee currently operates. As part of this process the Review Group sent out emails to all volunteer rangers inviting them to participate in an online survey. This was done in late May. Many thanks to the 148 people who replied. The information received has been most useful in shaping the thoughts of the Review Group.

Respondents came from a wide variety of areas but, unsurprisingly, most were working out of the main bases; Seven Sisters, Queen Elizabeth, Midhurst, Stanmer Park and Singleton.

There seems to be quite a high level of satisfaction with the efforts of the Committee to keep volunteers informed of its work, with 77% confirming that they thought the Committee was very, or fairly, effective in this regard.

The first chart to the right shows how people answered the question about how effective the Committee was at consulting their views on matters relating to the VRS.

While 37% of respondents felt that current methods for enabling volunteer rangers to communicate with each other were very, or quite, effective, 35% said they were unaware of such methods.

There was a mixed picture with regard to the effectiveness of area representatives with:

- **42%** saying that area representatives were very, or quite, effective at representing volunteers on the Committee.
- **24%** said they did not know who their representative was.
- **21%** felt unable to comment.

Respondents were asked to choose a statement which best reflects the effect of the work of the Committee on their experience as a volunteer. The chart to the right shows how people answered.

There was less than whole hearted support for the establishment of an online discussion forum with 60 % saying they would not use one.

Again, many thanks to those who participated, especially to all those who

wrote fuller answers to the questions. All of these have been read and considered.

In addition to conducting the survey of volunteers, members of the Review Group interviewed a significant number of SDNPA staff who work with, or have responsibility for volunteers. The information collected has been considered and analysed and will be presented to the whole VRS Committee at the next meeting in December, together with recommendations for the future. Following wider discussion by the whole VRS Committee, the final recommendations will be presented at the next AGM for approval.

The recommendations of the Review Group are now being considered by members of the wider committee. The final proposed recommendations will be sent out to all volunteers in early 2017 for comment and approval in advance of the AGM where they will then be voted on.

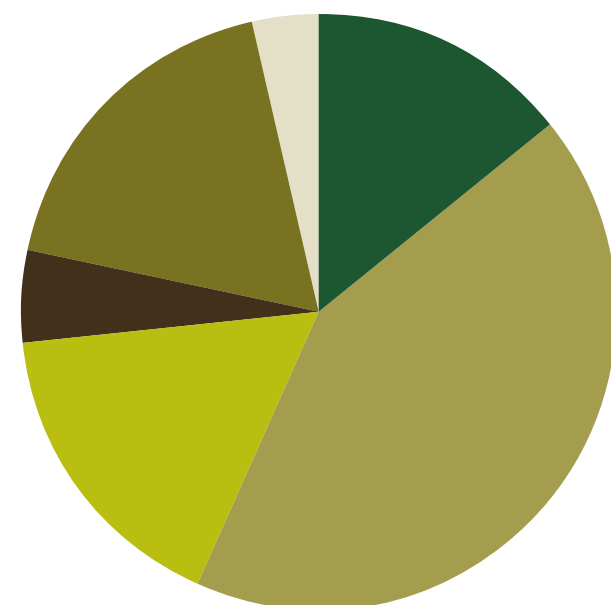
Volunteers will continue to be kept up to date with progress through Downland Thymes.

ALAN JONES, MEMBER OF THE VRS COMMITTEE REVIEW GROUP

Above: Volunteers clearing the River Meon in 2014

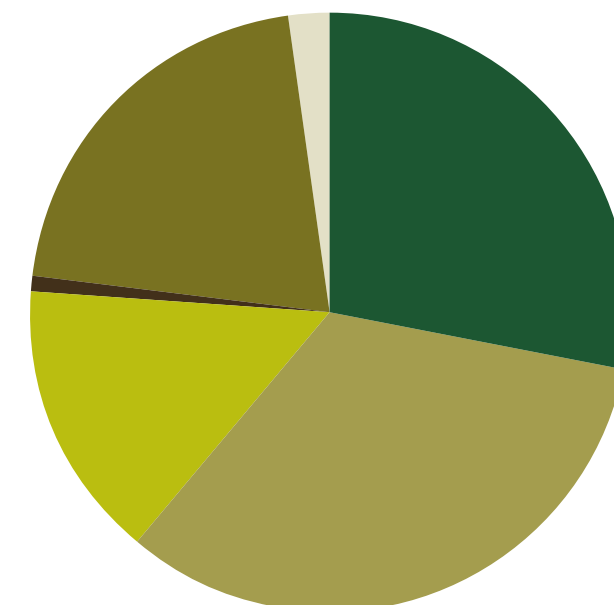
© SDNPA / Dan Oakley

## HOW EFFECTIVE IS THE COMMITTEE AT CONSULTING YOUR VIEWS?



Very effective  
Quite effective  
Not effective  
I have no interest in being consulted  
Do not know/ unable to answer  
Other

## THE EFFECT OF THE WORK OF THE VRS COMMITTEE ON YOUR EXPERIENCE




Significant positive effect  
Slight positive effect  
No effect  
Negative effect  
Do not know/ unable to answer  
Other





DUTCH ELM, THE DEADLY DISEASE PASSED ON BY MULTIPLE FUNGAL PATHOGENS INCLUDING THE TINIEST OF SAC FUNGUS SPORES (*OPHIOSTOMA NOVA-ULNA*) AND TRANSPORTED BY MANY BEETLES INCLUDING THE 3MM LONG LARGE ELM BARK BEETLE (*SCOLYTUS SCOLYTUS*) TO KILL SO MANY OF THE UK'S ELM TREES.

 Imported timber probably brought in the first spores in 1927 but by 1940 its spread appeared to have been contained. However, in 1967 a more virulent form was within a shipment of rock elm logs imported by the Netherlands (for clog production) from North America and it quickly spread to the UK from Europe. It has now destroyed the vast majority of our country's mature elm trees.

In late summer, newly hatched beetles fly from their birth tree to the nearest living elm, of whatever species, to feed on the sap found in the fork of younger branches. This sap contains a hormone essential for the female beetle to become sexually active. If such a beetle passed its larval stage under the bark of a tree infected by Dutch Elm Disease (DED) its body will be carrying the fungal spores. As it chews through the thinner bark of younger branches, spores enter the sap, quickly reproduce and introduce toxin into the water and nutritional xylem carrying system of the tree. The tree resists by gumming up its xylem system producing toxins in the affected area, cutting off the flow and resulting in wilt and autumnal colour.

Replete female beetles leave the food tree and seek out a dead or dying elm tree where they bore through and under the bark to create one or more galleries for their fertilised eggs. These hatch into larvae which feed on the wood around them (which harbours the sac fungus spores) and these are present in and outside the newly hatched adults as they emerge and fly to their chosen food source. The English elm is particularly susceptible.

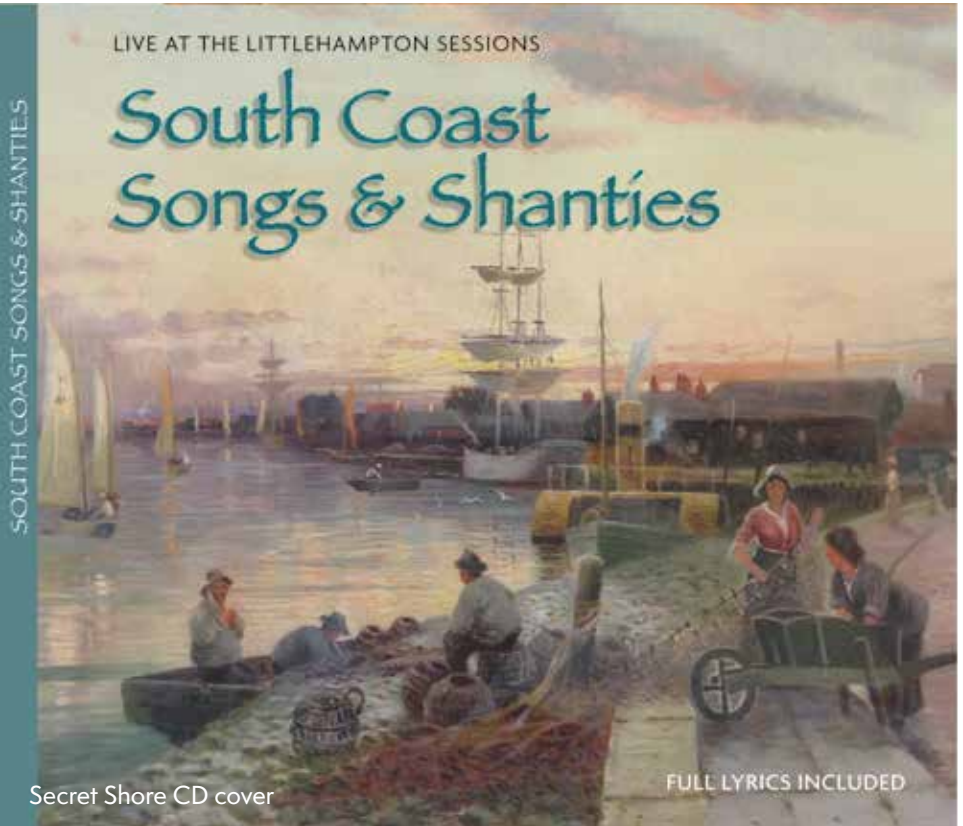
In the Eastern region of the South Downs National Park we have spent hundreds of hours checking for signs of infection, helping to lop and burn foliage and branches from felled, infected elm trees. Additional work involves stripping the bark from sawn wood and tree stumps and burning it. A sad task when you see the empty spaces in so many beautiful areas such as the villages and meadows of the Cuckmere Valley and stretches of the South Downs Way. Unfortunately, fungal spores can easily transfer between root systems and too often do so.

This major ecological disaster area includes Europe, North America, Canada and the UK, and has attracted worldwide scientific interest and the funding of preventative research. Disease resistant cultivars are being monitored and in some UK areas, such as Brighton, inoculation of pathogens to healthy trees appears effective. The SDNPA are keeping a watchful eye on the research for resistant elms and where possible will help support this work.

Capability Brown had the gift of foresight when planning the glorious landscapes we now enjoy. Have confidence in cultivars, wasps and woodpeckers and hope that our containing efforts are not in vain!

**SHIRLEY BRICE, EASTERN DOWNS VOLUNTEER RANGER**

For more information visit: [forestry.gov.uk/fr/hcou-4u4jcl](http://forestry.gov.uk/fr/hcou-4u4jcl). If you are aware of very mature/veteran English elms with the disease please email [andy.player@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:andy.player@southdowns.gov.uk).



## A DROP OF NELSON'S BLOOD WON'T DO YOU ANY HARM

The South Downs Folk Singers provided two song sets at the Secrets of the High Woods Celebration Day in Midhurst on the 24 September.

Their new CD was launched on 1 October to a packed audience at the Ropetackle Centre in Shoreham. If you missed the launch you can listen to a recording at – [youtube.com/watch?v=CqzU7G\\_zBJc&feature=youtu.be](https://youtube.com/watch?v=CqzU7G_zBJc&feature=youtu.be)

If you like what you hear why not purchase the CD which includes 14 tracks with a booklet describing the background behind each of the songs, which cover the main preoccupations of sailors and their partners within their disjointed lives, sex, love, booze and survival. Any profits go towards supporting the aims of the South Downs Society.

Here are four of the background stories behind a few of the tracks:

- 'Little Fighting Chance' reminds us that traditionally over the centuries we have fought several of the nations of Europe, especially the French. We spent substantial parts of the Middle Ages burning each other's coastal towns such as Winchelsea.
- 'Dark Eyed Sailor' poignantly features Rebecca backed by our leader Emily lamenting the possible loss of her true love, I won't spoil the ending.
- 'Littlehampton Collier Lads' robustly reminds us that coal did come from Newcastle.
- 'The Brave Eleven' commemorates the incident of the tragic loss of Worthing fishermen attempting a rescue before the first rowed RNLI lifeboat was installed there. There is a memorial at Broadwater Church.

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







# A DAY AT BINSWOOD

## A WALK ON THE WAY

A FEW YEARS BACK I WROTE ABOUT A MORNING WALK ALONG THE SOUTH DOWNS WAY AS PART OF MY MONITORING DUTIES AS A VOLUNTEER WARDEN. NOW I THOUGHT I MIGHT SHARE WITH YOU AN EARLY AUTUMN WALK I DID ON A BEAUTIFUL OCTOBER DAY WITH THE SUN LOW IN THE SKY AND A STIFF EASTERLY BREEZE – A LOVELY MORNING TO WALK THE WAY.



How things have changed in the years that I have been a Warden. One familiar landmark, the barn on the top of Gander Down, was totally burned out and now the landscape has lost a significant feature. The hedgerows on the same stretch have been taken down to five or six feet above the ground and the trees with them. The verges are cut during the late summer which means I couldn't find an elderberry. Sloes are few and far between this year so I began to wonder what was there in the way of autumn bounty.

I managed to find hips, haws and bryony, and a specimen of the hips of *Rosa rugosa*, I am not sure that this is a true native but it is sold as a hedging plant from nurseries. Lots of ivy I am glad to say as it gives late nectar for insects and later berries for the birds. There were no berries on wayfaring trees but the one spindle I did find will give a magnificent crop in a few weeks. Thistles in some fields and lots of tall umbellifers looking skeletal against the deep blue sky will give winter food for goldfinches. Rosebay willowherb also

decorated parts of the verges with their silky strands of seeds.

But what of the birds? Few and far between. I saw crows, rooks, wood pigeons, pheasants, a pair of swallows and half a dozen house martins, oh and a red kite. Buzzards and a goldcrest were heard but not one finch, lark or bunting. It could be that my eyes and ears aren't what they were but there does seem to be a definite decrease in numbers.

It wasn't all gloom; I met people who were out walking, cycling and exercising dogs and considering the distance my stretch is from the nearest village or car park that was encouraging. The Downs are a wonderful resource for exercise, companionship and contemplation; it's good to know that we are doing our bit to keep it that way.

**TERRY DOYLE, WESTERN DOWNS VOLUNTEER RANGER**

Top: Woodpecker's nest hole  
Left: *Rosa rugosa* hips  
© Terry Doyle



## NEAR THE NORTHWEST BORDER OF THE NATIONAL PARK, LIES BINSWOOD.

Mind you, it isn't exactly easy to find. Several miles north of Selborne, the wood is surrounded by farmland with little road access, merely a minor lane that peters out at the edge of the wood. It is in fact one of the few remaining pasture woodlands which somehow has survived intact over the last couple of centuries.

These days it is owned by the Woodland Trust, and this year they asked the VRS to help widen one of the woodland rides. So, in mid-October, our Monday group set off in two land rovers armed with chainsaws, brush cutters and hand tools to get stuck into some serious clearance.

Although the wood was hard to find, the journey out was uneventful. It was only when we arrived that we found more than we bargained for. Negotiating our way through a woodland ride we hit a wet

spot. Talk about getting stuck in – we really were, down to the axles and going nowhere fast. Lost in the middle of a remote woodland it would have taken anyone else simply ages to find us. What a relief therefore to have two vehicles.

We could have been in the mire all day, but our second land rover managed to tow us out without too much trouble and for the rest of the day we enjoyed cutting back the foliage in some glorious October sunshine. Binswood is a delightful ancient wood that harbours a wide variety of wildlife, but also hazards to trap the unwary. The trees grow on a clay substrate and you can easily lose yourself in its soft, wet soils as John, our driver, discovered to his cost. A day to remember indeed.

**JENNY DEEMAN, WESTERN DOWNS VOLUNTEER RANGER**

Main: Track near Binswood © John Denyer

Above: Stuck! © Jenny Deeman



# GETTING BACK OUT ON THE DOWNS

HELLO. MY NAME IS CHRIS POMFREY. I HAVE BEEN A SOUTH DOWNS VOLUNTEER FOR PROBABLY CLOSE TO 20 YEARS. WHEN I WASN'T VOLUNTEERING I WORKED AS A GARDENER SO BEING OUTDOORS HAS ALWAYS BEEN VERY IMPORTANT TO ME.

In November 2014, I suffered a severe stroke. I lost most of my memory and some of my speech, as well as weakening my right hand and leg. After my stroke I spent several weeks in hospital but was soon considered well enough to return home with some support. Two years on I still walk with a stick and now use my left hand for most tasks, but my speech is getting better and with the support of the Stanmer Rangers and Wednesday volunteer group I have managed to continue volunteering.

My first task back was hedge laying but it was probably too soon. Everybody seemed to know me and was pleased to see me but I couldn't remember anyone. It was very odd. Everything seemed muddled and I couldn't really remember what to do so I went home after a few hours feeling very low.

A few months later, now in the summer, I decided to try the flint walling task in Stanmer Park. There were fewer people there and even some I recognised, though I still didn't know their names. What was amazing was that not only could I remember what to do, but I could actually do it. I could see which flints would work best in the wall and place them accordingly. I used the lime mortar and filled the centre with rubble and small broken flints. Ranger Mark seemed happy with what I had done and I'm pretty sure I completed the stretch of wall I was working on faster than those around me... probably because I talked less and worked harder... just like the old days. I went home so tired I forgot to eat tea and woke up in the dark!

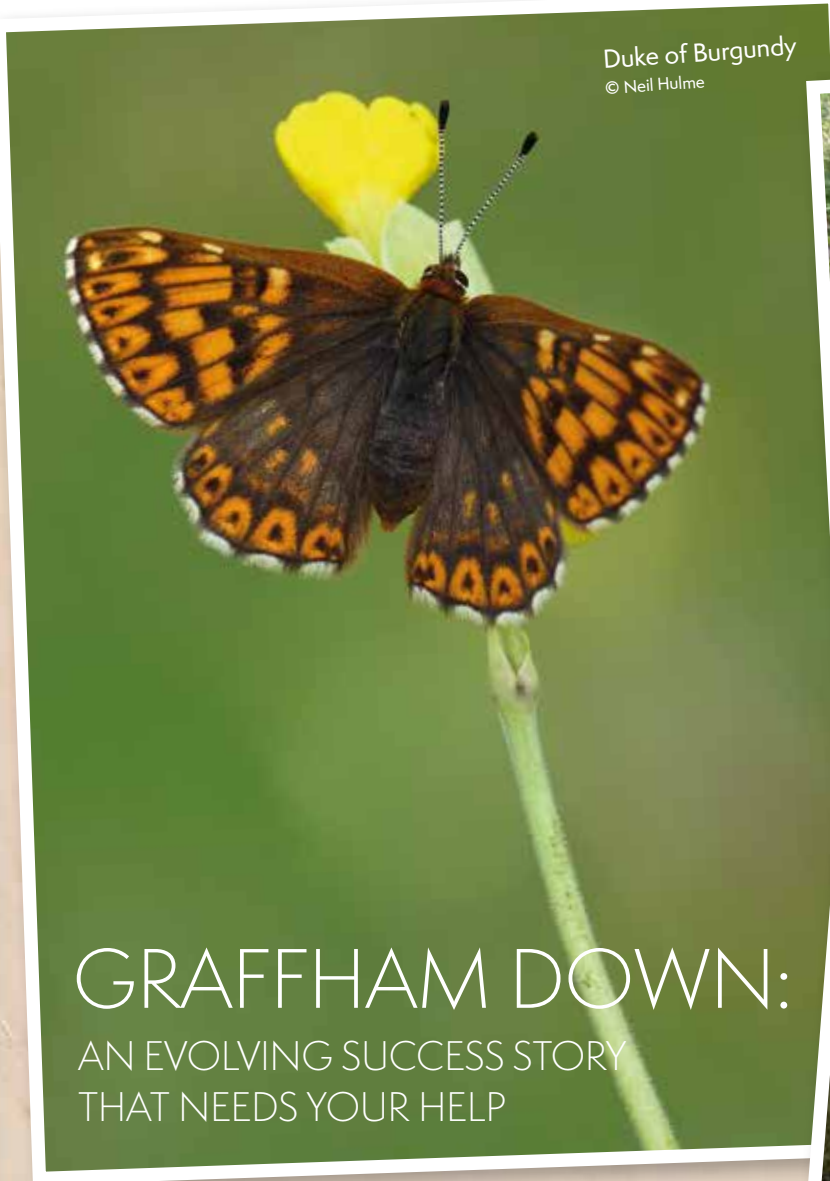
I have since helped with footpath clearance, hedge laying, which went much better the

second time, the Tide Mills project and many more flint walling tasks in Stanmer. Each time I get home from a task I am always tired and often a little bit frustrated, but always glad I spent a day on the Downs. Until my walking and balance gets better, tasks on steep slopes are still beyond me. So with the scrub season underway I won't be able to get out as much which is a shame. But if the ground is flat I'm sure you'll see me there, whatever the weather.

**CHRIS POMFREY, EASTERN DOWNS VOLUNTEER RANGER**

.....

**Chris Pomfrey** © Edi Little



Duke of Burgundy  
© Neil Hulme

## GRAFFHAM DOWN: AN EVOLVING SUCCESS STORY THAT NEEDS YOUR HELP

### GRAFFHAM DOWN IS FOUND ALONG THE SOUTH DOWNS WAY BETWEEN DUNCTON AND COCKING.

The Down has a combination of chalk grassland, woodland and scrub. In the 1980s, when the Common Agricultural Policy was encouraging self-sufficiency at almost any cost to the environment, a visionary group of individuals in Graffham Village formed the Graffham Down Trust to preserve as much nature as they could for indigenous fauna and flora. Over the decades the Trust has managed to expand its area under management to over 70 acres or more than 30 hectares. Roughly split 50:50 between chalk grassland and woodland/scrub.

Graffham Down Trust has been working closely with Natural England, Butterfly Conservation, the South Downs National Park Authority, Arun and Rother Connections, experts from the Sussex Dormice Network and many others in managing and monitoring the reserves.

In addition to the established populations of purple emperor, marbled white, meadow browns, common blue, hedge brown, peacock, red admiral, speckled wood, ringlet, dingy and grizzled skippers and many, many more, 2016 saw the return of the Duke of Burgundy to Graffham Down and the identification of Cosnard's netwinged beetle (one of the rarest insects in Britain) on the reserves.

The reserves are managed 100% by volunteers with the help of some rare breed badger faced sheep. The current focus of management is to maintain a diverse range of habitats from chalk grassland to woodland, with plenty of glades, rides and opportunities for different species of fauna and flora. A key role of the reserves is to provide connectivity for the various species between the more prevalent areas of grassland to the east and west.

**JIM KIRKE, GRAFFHAM DOWN VOLUNTEER**



Foxgloves  
© Graffham Down Trust



Sheep  
© Graffham Down Trust



This all requires a lot of physical work by volunteers. In the 2016/17 season, Graffham Down Trust are embarking on monthly 'mega' work parties including the offer of lifts from Graffham Church up to the Down and cake (hopefully with tea/coffee). The dates are planned to be:

- Sat 15th October
- Sun 20th November
- Sat 10th December
- Sun 29th January
- Sat 25th February
- Sat 18th March
- Saturday 1st April

Any help will be very much appreciated and if you are willing or able to come along please contact Jim Kirke on [jimkirke@hotmail.com](mailto:jimkirke@hotmail.com). For more information please have a look at the Trust's website. [graffhamdowntrust.org.uk](http://graffhamdowntrust.org.uk)



# 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.

## THE EIGHT BELLS, POLEGATE, JEVINGTON, BN26 5QB

This pub can be found in the village of Jevington which lies on the Jevington Road running from Polegate, just north of Eastbourne, to Friston on the A259. It is over 300 years old and has all the charm you might expect from a friendly, traditional country pub. It welcomes walkers, providing plastic bags for muddy boots, and there is a delightful beer garden with views across open fields. It serves locally brewed beers including those from the relatively new Long Man brewery which is situated in the neighbouring village of Littleington. It is only 200 yards from the South Downs Way and within easy reach of the Seven Sisters and Beachy Head.

[theeightbellsjevington.co.uk](http://theeightbellsjevington.co.uk)  
ALAN JONES, VOLUNTEER RANGER

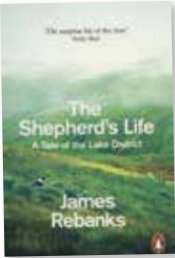
TRADITIONAL  
INN AWARD



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.

# BOOK REVIEW

**THE SHEPHERD'S LIFE**  
This is probably the best insight into the life of a farmer that I've ever read. James Rebanks tells the story of four generations of his sheep farming family in the fells and valleys of the Lake District. Factory farming this is not, telling, for example, of the heartbreak felt by livestock farming families during the foot and mouth disease outbreak of 2001, of losing entire flocks bred and nurtured with care and toil over many decades. It deals with the highs as well as the lows though and this is a celebration of a way of life that the author sees having a strong future as well as a brave and honourable history.



Occasionally the book can make you squirm slightly as a visitor to a working landscape seeking only beauty and fun, but it really adds layers to an understanding of what life as a hill farmer is all about and how the landscape of the Lake District works. For me, the most important thing about this book is that while his writing is impassioned, deeply personal and of the highest quality, James Rebanks is a sheep farmer first and foremost. His writing is, in the end, just another form of farm diversification.

IAN HARTLE, SDNPA VOLUNTEER DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

## PIC IN THE PARK

SU 843232

This Buddha is a surprising feature to find in the South Downs National Park. He (or is it she?) can be found beside a footpath in a wood in West Sussex. Of course, the wood is a part of the grounds of Chithurst Buddhist Monastery but since the monks cherish this location, their signs welcome you to enjoy the peaceful tranquillity of the site, you'll find that rights of way, and a nearby permissive path, allow you to explore the woods and visit the beautiful Hammer Pond. It's an opportunity well worth taking.



# 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'M SURE THE LANDY KEYS WERE HERE THIS MORNING" RICHARD COLE



# CHRISTMAS COOKING

RECIPES TO INSPIRE YOUR FESTIVE FEASTING...

## MULLED ALE

A warming winter drink.

Serves 3  
Prep time: 5 minutes  
Cook time: 2-3 minutes

### Ingredients

- 500ml bottle of your favourite real ale
- 150ml clear apple juice
- 50ml brandy
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 2 whole cloves
- Zest of half a lemon
- Peel of 1 clementine
- 3 tbsp caster sugar

### Method

1. Place the real ale in a large saucepan with the rest of the ingredients, and stir on a low heat to dissolve the sugar, gently bring up to a simmer being careful not to boil.
2. Ladle the mulled ale into warm glasses and serve immediately.

If desired, sieve the mulled ale to remove all the spices and peel before serving.

## DIANA'S MINCE PIE RECIPE

### Ingredients

- 1lb plain flour
- 6 oz icing sugar
- 10.5 oz butter
- zest and juice of 1 large orange
- Mince Meat (Marks and Spencers mincemeat with fig, hazelnuts and brandy goes really nicely!)

### Method

1. Sieve the flour and icing sugar into a bowl.
2. Add the orange zest and stir it in.
3. Rub in the butter as you would with pastry.
4. Use the orange juice to bring it together.
5. Wrap it in cling film and put in the fridge for an hour.
6. Once chilled simply roll out the pastry, use pastry rings to cut it and put in your fairy cake baking tray.
7. Fill each case with some mincemeat but not too much or it boils over, and then use a slightly smaller cutter to place a lid on top.
8. Bake at 180 degrees for 20 to 30 minutes, but best to keep an eye on them as ovens seem to differ.





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INTERNATIONAL DARK-SKY ASSOCIATION

SOUTH DOWNS DARK SKIES FESTIVAL



© Sumitra Sribhashyam

TO CELEBRATE OUR FIRST YEAR AS AN INTERNATIONAL DARK SKIES RESERVE WE ARE ORGANISING THE FIRST EVER SOUTH DOWNS DARK SKIES FESTIVAL.

A central event will run on Saturday 18 February, 'South Downs Stargazing Day', starting in the morning at Chichester Planetarium and culminating with a big event in the afternoon and evening in Midhurst which will include family activities followed by talks, workshops, a possible satellite link-up and, weather permitting, stargazing.

We will also be linking up with local astronomy groups to hold four stargazing parties (weather permitting) in different areas of the National Park on:

- 14 Feb at Stanmer Park Brighton,
- 16 Feb at Slindon, West Sussex (tbc),
- 21 Feb at Iping Common, West Sussex and
- 23 Feb at Old Winchester Hill, Hampshire.

We are encouraging partner organisations to run their own dark sky events under the banner of the South Downs Dark Skies Festival between Friday 10 and Sunday 26 February (to coincide with the different school half-term weeks: 13–17 Feb for East Sussex, 20–24 Feb in West Sussex and Hampshire). The National Trust have already let us know that they will be holding a stargazing night on Saturday 11 February followed by a week of stargazing fun and family activities, all at Birling Gap.

As always we will be on the lookout for volunteers to help at the events so if you'd like to get involved or you work for an organisation who would like to run their own star gazing event as part of the festival please email [laura.warren@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:laura.warren@southdowns.gov.uk)

NEW PEOPLE

Over the past few months a number of new employees have joined the National Park Authority team. The following are a few who you may have already met and are all based at the South Downs Centre.



ANDY PLAYER  
Woodlands – Landscape and Biodiversity Lead



JONATHAN DEAN  
Education Officer



JAMES WINKWORTH  
Head of Marketing and Income Generation



HEATHLANDS REUNITED

AMBITIOUS WORK TO RESTORE AND REUNITE AREAS OF RARE HEATHLAND IN THE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK STARTED THIS AUTUMN THANKS TO A £1.44 MILLION GRANT FROM THE HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND (HLF).

South Downs heaths are not only home to rare plants and animals – such as the sand lizard, woodlark and silver-studded blue butterfly – they are also important spaces for people. But heathland currently covers just one per cent of the South Downs National Park and has shrunk into 'islands' where isolated plants and animals are far more vulnerable to local extinction.

The Heathlands Reunited project, led by the National Park Authority with 10 partner organisations, aims to create and improve heathland at 41 sites – covering an area greater than 1,200 football pitches over the next five years. Thanks to kind contributions from our partners, in addition to the HLF funding, the total project value is £2.37m.



HEATHER THE HEATHLANDS REUNITED SCARECROW

Under the dark South Downs skies in the depths of the heath a scarecrow was born... Heather was made using heathland scrub and set off on her mission to spread the word about the Heathlands Reunited project at the Weald and Downland Scarecrow Parade. She was put in place with a small plaque explaining who she was and then left to the mercy of the crowds at the Autumn and Countryside Show. There was stiff competition from around 13 other organisations but later that week we found out that Heather had been crowned the winner.

The Weald and Downland Museum said, 'She really was a very impressive scarecrow and definitely does a good job of representing the South Downs National Park and Heathlands Reunited project. Congratulations from all of us here at the Museum to everyone who was involved in her creation.'

HEATHLANDS REUNITED

VOLUNTEERS INFORMATION MORNING

HELP US TO HELP THE HEATHS

SUNDAY 11 DECEMBER 10.00-12.30

SOUTH DOWNS CENTRE HALL, NORTH STREET, MIDHURST, WEST SUSSEX, GU29 9DH

10.00 Introduction to the South Downs National Park

10.30 Introduction to Heathlands Reunited

10.45 Volunteering with Heathlands Reunited

- Heritage
- Dog Walking Ambassadors
- Field Point Photography
- Wildlife Monitoring
- Practical Management

11.45 Questions and Expressions of interest

12.30 Close

Through Heathlands Reunited we plan to join up heathlands covering an area greater than 1,200 football pitches - to do this we're going to need some help. Volunteering in the South Downs National Park is a great way to get outside, meet friendly new people and discover new places. Join us and find out how you can get involved.

FOR INFORMATION AND BOOKING: 01730 819320

#HelpTheHeaths

The National Lottery

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK

HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED...



# BEN FOGLE'S DAY OF ADVENTURES IN THE SOUTH DOWNS

Cycling, trail-running, picnicking and geocaching are all on the menu for adventurer Ben Fogle in a new short film promoting the South Downs National Park to national and international visitors.

The film, launched for World Responsible Tourism Day on 8 November, showcases just some of the high energy or more gentle experiences visitors can enjoy in the National Park.

Nick Heasman said: "With delicious local food and drink, dark skies for stargazing and 3,300km of footpaths, bridleways and byways to explore – including the South Downs Way National Trail – our landscapes

and communities have so much to offer. Add in quirky local places to stay, direct trains from London and Gatwick, local bus links and bicycles or electric bikes to hire and it's easier than ever to be a responsible traveller."

Ben Fogle, says: "The South Downs is an area rich in natural beauty with great trails to follow and history to discover. What better place for a spot of adventuring?"

The film is one of a series made by Geocast TV to promote UK travel destinations and you can watch it online here:

[southdowns.gov.uk/ben-fogle-adventures-in-the-south-downs](https://southdowns.gov.uk/ben-fogle-adventures-in-the-south-downs).

© Geocast TV/ SDNPA

## THE SECRETS OF THE HIGH WOODS BOOK

BREATHTAKING VIEWS AND TRANQUIL, UNSPOILT PLACES ARE TWO OF THE REASONS THAT THE SOUTH DOWNS WAS MADE INTO A NATIONAL PARK, RECEIVING MILLIONS OF DAY VISITS EVERY YEAR.

But, as many of you know, the Secrets of the High Woods project has uncovered evidence of prisoner-of-war camps; docking stations for airships the size of nine double-decker buses; abandoned unexploded bombs; and a training school where Canadian soldiers underwent an assault course under live fire. These stories and more are now published in the new book; *Secrets of the High Woods: Revealing Hidden Landscapes*.

Seven curious facts uncovered in *Secrets of the High Woods: Revealing Hidden Landscapes*:

**1** By the end of WWI 6.5 miles of light railway ran through the Slindon estate to carry timber back to a sawmill. At the same time several miles of aerial ropeway ran across the Downs from Eartham Wood to Mid-

Lavant via Goodwood to carry slab wood to a factory making acetate for use in explosives.

**2** Around 200 prisoners of war were held at the Slindon camp which consisted of at least 19 huts, a cookhouse, a dining room, a bathhouse and an electricity generator.

**3** Three airships at a time could be moored at Slindon. The Sea Scout Zero class airships were 143 feet long and 44 feet high and carried out regular anti-submarine patrols.

**4** Kingley Vale was an important military training ground during WWII with as many as 2000 Canadians practising there in the run-up to D-Day.

**5** With live rounds and mortars used for training in Kingley Vale there are tales of having to remove the bodies of nine Canadians and one member of the Home Guard was killed by a stray bullet in 1942. However Kingley Vale was never sealed off from the public.

**6** A 1956 newspaper headline claimed 'Death Lurks in this Lovely Vale' but it wasn't until 1990 that a proper clearance



© SDNPA / A.Purkiss

of the site was made – uncovering 6000 bombs of various types.

**7** The Canadian military training school at Stansted Park was said to be one of the toughest in the country. This included a nineteen-stage assault course negotiated under live fire.

The book also tells how, by using airborne laser scanning (LiDAR) technology and volunteer archaeologists, the project has revealed extensive prehistoric field systems and a lost Roman road.

*Secrets of the High Woods: Revealing Hidden Landscapes*, edited by John Manley is available to buy / read online – visit [southdowns.gov.uk](https://southdowns.gov.uk) for more details.

**SOUTH DOWNS  
VOLUNTEER  
RANGER SERVICE**

**SOUTH DOWNS  
NATIONAL PARK**

Downland Thymes: News for the South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service. Issue 74, November 2016. © 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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