

## Case Study

# Cloth Farm –

enhancing biodiversity and preservation of the archaeological heritage

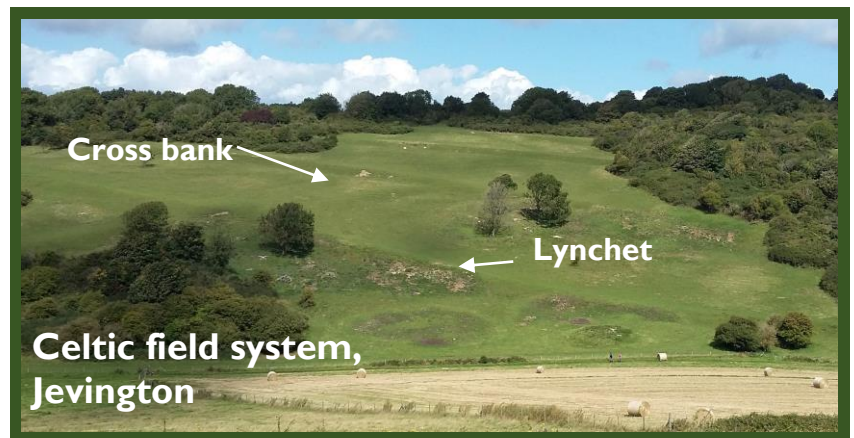
### Background

Cloth Farm is located in Jevington, East Sussex. The majority of the site is comprised of a single parcel of grazed land which contains a large 'Celtic' field system, one of the best preserved in the South East of England.

Regular aggregate field systems date from the Bronze Age (2000-700 BC) to the end of the fifth century AD. The field system near Jevington, survives well and provides information on late prehistoric farming practice. Much of the area has not been ploughed in the recent past and the earthworks forming the lynchets and cross banks are well preserved. The fields, lynchets and boundaries will contain archaeological information and environmental evidence relating to the field system, the people who farmed here, and the landscape in which they lived.

This Ancient Monument was first scheduled in 1966. Scheduling is the selection of nationally important archaeological sites. Although archaeology is all around us, Scheduled sites form a carefully chosen sample of them, which are closely managed. While some change may be possible there is a presumption that they will be handed on to future generations in much the same state that we have found them. Scheduling derives its authority from the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act of 1979.

<https://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1002257>.



### The project

Over the last 40 years the land area inclusive of the field system has become overgrown with scrub which is having a detrimental effect on the site through root disturbance. Also the scrub provides safe cover for burrowing animals which may damage below ground archaeological remains. Scrubland describes an area of land which is typically covered with low trees, shrubs and bushes.

The South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA), working in partnership with the landowner, East Sussex County Council, Natural England and Historic England has been working on the site for three years using contractors and volunteers to clear scrub; it remains a high priority to clear as much of this scrub as possible, for the benefit of:

- the Ancient Monument,
- the chalk grassland and down land habitat,
- the public, by opening up further areas for public open access.

Chalk grassland supports a number of rare plants and animals, many of which have unique associations with this habitat and cannot thrive, or survive, elsewhere. Chalk grassland is under threat as a consequence of changing land use, with land ploughed up for crops, or left un-grazed and gradually taken over by scrub and woodland. Other areas have been lost to development, quarrying, road construction and tree planting. The disappearance of chalk grassland is thought to have led to the drastic decline of many species including bumblebees, butterflies, farmland birds and wildflowers.

---

“The scrub is being removed from this important designated archaeological site to protect the remains. The work so far has been brilliant and the earthwork remains are now much more visible. The plan is to return this site to the condition recorded in the 1950s when it was mainly chalk grassland.”

Greg Chuter, County Archaeologist, East Sussex County Council, January 2018.

---

## The outcome

A programme of works has been put in place to continue to remove trees and scrub. Approximately 4 hectares of scrub and trees have been removed from the field system between 2012 and 2017. A felling license was obtained for some of the site and the trees were cleared but further work required a second license. Therefore in future it is important to allow more time for the application process (for a felling license) to avoid untimely delays.

Volunteers from the South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service carried out a total of 20 tasks between 2015 and 2017, providing a valuable resource for the project.

A change in practice has taken place which means that burn sites are now protected by tin sheets to prevent heat damage to archeology. However, burning on tin can be difficult and messy with bits of metal contaminating the site and therefore other alternatives are being explored.

### The South Downs National Park Partnership Management Plan (PMP)

**2014–19** sets out a shared vision for how we all would like the National Park to be in the future. It includes 11 long-term outcomes, and provides a framework for communities, landowners, charities, businesses and public bodies to work together to make this vision and these outcomes a reality.

#### This project successfully achieved the following PMP outcomes:

**Outcome 1:** The landscape character of the National Park, its special qualities and local distinctiveness have been conserved and enhanced by effectively managing land and the negative impacts of development and cumulative change.

**Outcome 2:** There is increased capacity within the landscape for its natural resources, habitats and species to adapt to the impacts of climate change and other pressures.

**Outcome 3:** A well-managed and better connected network of habitats and increased population and distribution of priority species now exist in the National Park.

**Outcome 4:** The condition and status of cultural heritage assets and their settings is significantly enhanced, many more have been discovered and they contribute positively to local distinctiveness and sense of place.

[southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/SDNP-Partnership-Management-Plan-2014-19.pdf](https://southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/SDNP-Partnership-Management-Plan-2014-19.pdf)

## The future

Protecting archaeology and chalk grassland can often be mutually beneficial although care must be taken to avoid detrimental impacts on protected species that may be associated with scrub.

Ongoing grazing will be required to maintain the restored chalk grassland on the cleared scrub areas to keep them free from regrowth that will preserve the ancient field system and chalk grassland habitat. This activity is included in the landowners' on-going land management plan.

For further information please contact: Tim Squire, Ranger, Eastern Downs, SDNPA.

Tel: 01730 819326

Email:

[tim.squire@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:tim.squire@southdowns.gov.uk)



A piece of Bronze Age pottery found at Cloth Farm

March 2018