



# SOUTH DOWNS NEWS

## WORK AND PLAY IN YOUR NATIONAL PARK

This month we are:

- Asking people who love the **South Downs Way to help us mend it;**
- Contemplating a Boxing Day walk through **the lost village of Tide Mills** and discovering how someone once **grew pineapples next to Newhaven.**
- Learning **the difference between a tree and a bush** – it's not simple;
- **Giving away a brewery tour and craft beer gift box** thanks to Langham Brewery

As always please send your comments and ideas to us at [newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk)

## DO YOU LOVE THE SOUTH DOWNS WAY?

*20,000 people walk, cycle or ride the length of the South Downs Way national trail and millions more will explore sections of it on days out each year – that causes a lot of wear and tear! A new campaign is asking people who love the trail to help raise £120,000 to mend it.*

It's a blustery morning in November and Ben Bessant, South Downs Way Ranger is cheerfully driving a National Park vehicle up a 23% slope over potholes that would destroy a normal car, "This is one of the easier to reach sections of the trail that we need to fix."

Ben is taking a journalist, Malcolm Shaw from ITV's Meridian, up to film a damaged section of the South Downs Way at Plumpton Plain, one of four sections of trail that the South Downs National Park Trust is raising funds to fix. Even at 10am on this less-than-pleasant weekday we spot a few of cyclists, some trail runners and lots of walkers and watch them navigate the mud.



### *By March it's more-or-less one long muddy puddle"*

More than 80,000 people walk the high Plumpton Plain track between Ditchling Beacon and the market town of Lewes every year and although it's 200m above the sea, the path is flat – surface water is a big problem. "Farm vehicles also need to use this section of track and a small rut can quickly turn into a puddle that joins up with other puddles," says Ben, "and the path gets wider as people try to avoid the mud, making the problem worse."

Every summer the path dries out but, come the autumn rains, the problems start again. "By March it's more-or-less one long muddy puddle," says Ben.

At more than 1km long and at least 3m wide, it will take £25,000 to repair, strengthen and add drainage to this section alone, which can at least be reached by vehicle. Existing funding allows for most repairs but the campaign is focusing on four significant projects which, because they are on more remote sections of the path, are too expensive to tackle. Each year, as the erosion and mud gets worse, they get more damaged and become harder to fix.

But Ben is heartened by the enthusiastic comments from the people we talk to on the trail. "We've got a long way to go but when you see how much pleasure the South Downs Way gives, you realise why this campaign is important."

The 'Mend our Way' campaign is being run by the South Downs National Park Trust, a new charity which works with partners to protect the National Park for future generations.

Find out more and pledge your support at [www.southdowns.gov.uk/mendourway](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/mendourway)

Watch Ben and the Mend our Way on ITV Meridian at [www.itv.com/news/meridian/update/2017-11-21/mend-our-way-appeal-to-repair-south-downs-trail/](http://www.itv.com/news/meridian/update/2017-11-21/mend-our-way-appeal-to-repair-south-downs-trail/)

'Mend our Way' is part of the national 'Make a Million' initiative, run by the British Mountaineering Council. Find out more at [mendmountains.thebmc.co.uk](http://mendmountains.thebmc.co.uk)



## THE EBB AND FLOW OF TIDE MILLS

*If you're looking for a curious place to take a Boxing Day stroll, or a complete antidote to Christmas excess, then a visit to Tide Mills might suit your purposes. New interpretation panels show how much we are still learning about the history of this unusual nature reserve just across the river Ouse from the port of Newhaven.*

### SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Walking around Tide Mills today is a strange experience. You follow old stone walls and concrete trackways down to the beach, past old foundations of buildings. There are clear signs of industry, but where are the people? Who lived here and why is there so little left of their lives?

Fortunately for the curious the Sussex Archaeology Society have been 'digging' into the stories of this abandoned community and a series of interpretation panels on the site, recently updated thanks to funding from East Sussex County Council, the South Downs National Park Authority and Newhaven Port and Properties (the site owners), explain the story of this strange place.

Tide Mills was 'born' in 1761 when the Duke of Newcastle granted permission for three West Sussex corn merchants to build a dam and tidal mill where a former course of the river Ouse met the sea and a village grew up around the business. A new railway line connected it to Newhaven and Seaford in 1864 but the mill finally closed in 1883. However, the village continued.

After the mill closed a wireless relay station was established on the beach closer to the harbour and a Great War seaplane base was established in 1917 to combat the submarine threat. In the 1920s it was the home of Captain David Dale's racing stables and a hospital for sick children. Once the villagers were evacuated by 1941, Tide Mills first had defences put up and was then used for military training. At the end of World War II what remained of the settlement were removed.

There are clear signs of industry, but where are the people? Who lived here and why is there so little left of their lives?



Now you see it: the Mill House in 1880, note the curved wall facing the photographer in front of the building





*Now you don't! This piece of wall is all that's left from the previous picture.*

"With such recent history you'd think there would be nothing new to find here," says Luke Barber, Research Officer for the Sussex Archaeology Society. "But we're still finding buildings we didn't know about. The many old maps and photographs clearly do not tell the whole story"

Luke has been leading excavations on the site since 2006 and one recent find is one of the country's first excavated 'pineapple pits'. "One of the mill owners, William Catt, grew very wealthy and was clearly a great horticulturist, who perhaps wanted to impress people with his ability to grow tropical fruit. His sunken pineapple pit would have originally been heated with manure – allowing him to grow fresh pineapples right here next to Newhaven!"

"We are revealing the stories of real, local people's lives. We can even, just about, talk to the people who lived here at the end of the village's life. I took one lady to the site of the room where her brother was born. We stood by the fireplace where her mother probably sat as she nursed him."

As it's by the sea and next to the Ouse Estuary nature reserve, Tide Mills is also a good spot for birdwatching with species such as purple sandpiper and ringed plover visiting the site. Other wildlife to look out for here includes the long tailed blue butterfly – a rare migrant which has been visiting the site for the last few years, grass snakes and other reptiles. The rare shingle habitat is good for coastal flora species such as yellow horned poppy and sea kale.

*"His sunken pineapple pit would have originally been heated with manure – allowing him to grow fresh pineapples right here next to Newhaven!"*

Find out more about the history Tidemills and get involved with the Friends of Tidemills group at [tidemills.webs.com/](http://tidemills.webs.com/)



## GIVE THE SOUTH DOWNS THIS CHRISTMAS

*Still trying to find the perfect gift for someone special? If they love the South Downs then we have a few ideas and each one gives something back to the National Park.*

### For the craft beer lover

Award winning South Downs brewery Langham have renamed their Best Bitter after the National Park and 5p from every bottle will go straight to the South Downs National Park Trust.



Gift packs from £8 or add a brewery tour and tasting for £10 per person  
<http://langhambrewery.co.uk/beer-shop/>

### For the tea/ coffee drinker who's proud of their achievement



"Did I mention that I finished the South Downs Way this year?.." Yes you did, and we're proud of you too. It's not quite the Jules Rimet but would you like a cup of

something hot in a mug with the name of EVERY hill top you scaled on it?

£10.50 + p&p from the National Trail shop  
[www.nationaltrail.co.uk/south-downs-way](http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/south-downs-way)

## For your budding astronomer...

As if your star struck Brian/Briony Cox-to-be needs any encouragement to 'Embrace the Darkness'! Also available in grown-up sizes because you're never too old to get excited about nebula.



Children's sizes £14 from Teemill, all profits go to support the South Downs National Park Trust.  
[southdowns.teemill.co.uk/product/dark-night-skies-childrens-t-shirt/](https://southdowns.teemill.co.uk/product/dark-night-skies-childrens-t-shirt/)

## For a 'one of a kind'

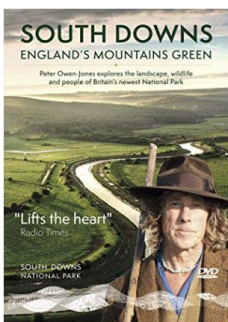
Old signpost markers never die, but they do need to be retired from the hills from time-to-time. And then we sell them to raise funds to support the trail.



They're obviously limited edition, every sign is different and comes with the grid-reference of where it spent its life. The word unique gets bandied around a lot but we think it's justified here.

From £45 on the National Trail shop  
[www.nationaltrail.co.uk/south-downs-way](http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/south-downs-way)

## For an adventure from their sofa



Join Peter Owen-Jones for an uplifting journey across the South Downs National Park that the Sunday Times described as 'A poetic and stunning portrait of the South Downs National Park.'

*South Downs: England's Mountains Green* is now available on DVD – and if you buy it directly from the

South Downs Centre in Midhurst all profits go to the South Downs National Park Trust.

£14.99 + £1.50 p&p. Drop in to the South Downs Centre in Midhurst or order on 01730 814810 from 9am-5pm Monday to Friday.



## NEXT STOP WEST MEON NATURE STATION

*With a huge amount of hard work, a lot of local support and some future funding secured from the South Downs National Park Authority's Sustainable Communities Fund, two National Park volunteers have taken a derelict storage depot and led its transformation into a nature reserve for a local school.*

It's surprising to learn that a school right in the heart of the South Downs National Park could have almost no outdoor space. "We literally have two tiny playgrounds at the back and front of the school, and even part of that is borrowed from the church," says Julie Kelly, headmistress of West Meon Church of England Primary. "We use the village recreation ground and hall and take the children out a lot to places like Queen Elizabeth Country Park, but that does involve a lot of travel." But earlier this year the school gained a brand new nature reserve, just ten minutes' walk from the school gates.

West Meon Nature Station exists thanks largely to the efforts of South Downs Volunteer Rangers Martin Cowell and Russell Cleaver who both worked on the development of the Meon Valley Trail, a 16km multi-user track that follows the line of an old disused railway.

*"We started talking to the school and discovered that they had a real need for an outdoor area,"*





*West Meon station before work started*

Martin lives in the village and wanted to find a better use for the derelict storage depot, once West Meon Station, next to the trail head. Russell brought along his experience of fundraising and countryside management and they approached the National Park Authority, the Parish Council and Hampshire County Council, who own the site. The idea of a natural space for the school to use was born.

"We started talking to the school and discovered that they had a real need for an outdoor area," says Martin, whose love of outdoor crafts has also come in handy in making two benches for the children and a huge hurdle-gate.

National Park Volunteers and staff from Hampshire County Council Countryside Services have put in days of work clearing the site, improving drainage and installing two further benches. Funding from the National Park Volunteers' Reserve Fund covered the cost of fencing to make the area safe and further work will be covered by a £1,500 Grant from the National Park Authority's Sustainable Communities Fund.

Meanwhile Russell has been very satisfied by the reuse of resources, "we found unused roadstone and gravel on the site which the volunteers have been able to recycle into pathways. But our work was only the first phase, it will now be up to the children to help decide what happens next on the site."

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*Volunteers and contractors get to work on the site.*

Pupil Finn Canaway came up with the name for the site which opened last summer. So far it's mainly been used for science and geography classes but there are also plans to use it for creative writing and also have an area for quiet reflection. "The school suddenly goes quieter and I know that the children have gone up to the Nature Station," says Julie. "Having this on our doorstep is an amazing thing. Everyone has wellies by the door, they just pull them on and off they go!"

*"The school suddenly goes quieter and I know that the children have gone up to the Nature Station,"*



*Finn Canaway helps to officially open the Nature Station.*

Do you have a project or idea that could bring social, environmental, economic or cultural benefits to a community within the National Park?

Find out if it's eligible for a Sustainable Communities Fund Grant at

[www.southdowns.gov.uk/sustainable-communities-fund/](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/sustainable-communities-fund/)



## WIN A BREWERY TOUR AND CRAFT BEER GIFT BOX

*The lovely people at Langham Brewery have not only renamed their best bitter after the National Park but they are very kindly donating 5p from every bottle sold to the South Downs National Park Trust.*

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To celebrate we have a craft beer gift box and a brewery tour around the Langham Brewery for two people to give away. That should help to brighten up your January!

Anyone who signs up as a new member of the Newsletter during December will automatically be entered but to make sure our existing readers don't miss out you can also enter by emailing us at the address below before 31 December.

To enter the draw email us with the subject 'Langham Prize Draw' to [newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk).

Read the draw terms & conditions <http://bit.ly/2iKzYEt>

Visit the Langham Brewery website [www.langhambrewery.co.uk/](http://www.langhambrewery.co.uk/)

## FIVE THINGS TO DO IN THE SOUTH DOWNS THIS MONTH

Find these & more events across the National Park and submit your own events at [southdowns.gov.uk/events/](http://southdowns.gov.uk/events/)



- Make a festive willow decoration at the Sustainability Centre
- Enjoy tales of winter magic at Butser Ancient Farm
- Go wild with your family and discover winter birds at RSPB Pulborough Brooks
- Take an imaginary grand tour of Europe at Petworth House
- Become a young Wildlife Ranger and explore Seven Sisters with the Sussex Wildlife Trust



## ON THE GROUND

Don't forget to say hello if you spot our rangers and volunteers out working in the National Park. Here's a taste of what they achieved in November 2017.

- Completed **habitat management work in the River Meon** at East Meon with the Wild Trout Trust, including managing vegetation planted during previous river restoration work.
- Updated the **Selborne Landscape Partnership group on monitoring records** of the group's key target species and **finalised harvest mouse surveys for this winter** within the area.
- Organised **brushcutter training for volunteers** ahead of this winter's scrub management work.
- Carried out six days volunteering at an important chalk grassland site near Winchester, **clearing dogwood, blackthorn, hawthorn and bramble**.
- **Planted hazel at a local coppiced woodland** which is managed for the benefit of wildlife
- Helped to clear heathland at RSPB Pulborough Brooks as part of restoration work and in **preparation for the reintroduction of the field cricket**.
- Held a **coppicing training week at Clapham Wood**
- Led **Heartsmart walks at Slindon, Duncton and Petworth**.



- **Repaired barn owl boxes and installed new ones** – and found evidence that boxes put up last spring have been used over summer and are active as roosts going into winter.
- Made changes to gates to **improve accessibility at Graffham**.
- **Resurfacing work on the 100m of the South Downs Way at Amberley** and a trackway at Swanborne Lake to improve access for everyone.
- **Surveyed 100 dormouse boxes** for the National Dormouse Monitoring Programme
- Carried out **habitat management at Kingley Vale**.
- Installed **nine new interpretation panels at Tide Mills**.

[southdowns.gov.uk/national-park-authority/our-work/on-the-ground](https://southdowns.gov.uk/national-park-authority/our-work/on-the-ground)

## YOU SAY:

Do you have a story you want to tell about the National Park? A burning issue that you think needs to be addressed? Please let us know.



To submit a comment for our newsletter please email [newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk). For a fast and direct response to your questions please email [info@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:info@southdowns.gov.uk)

Please note that only contributors who submit their full name and address can be considered for publication though we will not publish your full address. Please make it clear whether you are speaking on your own behalf or that of an organisation you represent. We reserve the right to shorten comments and edit where necessary.

## MOST ASKED...

Send us your questions about a particular area of work in the National Park.

Answering this month is: **Bob Epsom, SDNPA Woodland Officer**



### WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A TREE AND A BUSH?

There isn't a precise definition but it is usually determined by size and shape, with trees being larger in size and bushes being rounded. Bushes or shrubs usually have multiple stems whereas trees tend to have one main stem. Some species of tree that grow tall can also be managed as smaller bushes – for example, Hornbeam and just to add to the confusion where trees are coppiced they will have many stems.

### WHY DO WE HAVE TO MANAGE WOODLANDS?

We need to manage our woods to keep them healthy and prepare for threats such as climate change, pests and diseases.

Coppicing, thinning and keeping rides open lets light in to the woodland floor which is important for increasing biodiversity and new tree growth. But you also need to leave some darker areas for other species.

Well managed woodlands also have an important economic role – providing jobs in forestry, saw mills, and end users of wood. “A wood that pays is a wood that stays” is a saying that emphasises the importance of using our timber resources more effectively.

As well as all of this well-managed woodland management supports carbon sequestration, flood reduction and recreation.

### HOW BAD IS THE DAMAGE FROM DISEASES LIKE ASH DIEBACK GOING TO BE?

Ash dieback disease is now prevalent throughout the South Downs National Park and is likely to change the landscape dramatically. Ash is a significant tree on the chalk downs where it has colonised former pastures and filled gaps left by the 1987 storm. Ash trees are common in our hedgerows and the losses here will be significant. If other species don't naturally regenerate other species will need to be planted.

But we can't let management of ash dieback happen at the expense of other woodland management. It's not the only pest or disease we are likely to face and we need to be prepared. Keeping a good diversity of tree species and using different management techniques, such as coppicing, is key to future proofing our woods.

The Forestry Commission provide lots of up to date information on pests, diseases and climate change.

Read more of Bob's answers

[www.southdowns.gov.uk/most-asked-bob-epsom-sdnpa-woodland-officer/](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/most-asked-bob-epsom-sdnpa-woodland-officer/)

### NEXT MONTH: Fundraising for the National Park

James Winkworth, Head of Income Generation and Marketing answers questions about the South Downs National Park Trust – send your questions to [newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk)





## LEWES DEPOT WINS PRESTIGIOUS PLANNING AWARDS

We're very proud of our planners! The Depot Cinema in Lewes has been crowned overall winner at the RTPI South East Awards for Planning Excellence as well as being named winner in the Excellence in Planning for Heritage category.

The prize recognises the work by SDNPA planners and Burrell Foley Fischer Architects to get the best possible design for the building – as covered in the July issue of this newsletter.

Read 'Lewes gets a cinema' from South Downs News 2017 [www.southdowns.gov.uk/lewes-gets-a-cinema/](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/lewes-gets-a-cinema/)

## SDNPA LAUNCHES NEW NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING CONSULTANCY SERVICE

*"The support provided by SDNPA to the East Meon Neighbourhood Plan was crucial in our success. They gave clear insight into the process and incisive advice on how to address some of our more difficult decisions, while supporting the objectives of our NDP. At no time did we feel pressured into accepting the default planning policies. Their support in managing the examiners comments enabled East Meon to retain its character and meet the objectives of our plan."* George Thompson East Meon Neighbourhood Plan steering group

Over the past seven years our small team of planners and community development specialists have supported more than 50 Neighbourhood Planning Groups as well as Village Design Statements, Parish Plans and Local Landscape Character Assessments across the National Park. Along the way they've gained

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a wealth of experience at taking planning out into our communities.

Now we want to share these skills beyond our borders with a new consultancy service offering neighbourhood and community planning support. Our plan is to offer a bespoke service helping parish councils and local authorities to deliver plans that are sensitive to landscape and village or town character and firmly guided by the needs and aspirations of the community – in particular, in rural communities in other National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs).

For the South Downs National Park Authority, the service will provide an income stream supporting work back here in the South Downs.

Find out more at  
[www.southdowns.gov.uk/npconsultancy](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/npconsultancy)



## NATIONAL PARK MINISTER PLANTS OAK TREE

Lord Gardiner, Minister for National Parks, visited the South Downs on Friday 1 December and marked tree week by planting an oak with pupils from Easebourne CE Primary School.

Lord Gardiner said: "I am delighted to be here in this wonderful and wooded National Park, to celebrate National Tree Week. We can all be proud of these beautiful parts of our country. It has been a particular honour to plant an oak, which I am proud to call our national tree. It is vitally important we continue to value our nation's trees, ensuring their resilience against the threats they face. That is why we are investing more than £37 million to understand pests and diseases and find new ways to tackle them."

Read the full story  
[www.southdowns.gov.uk/minister-rural-affairs-biosecurity-plants-oak-south-downs-national-park/](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/minister-rural-affairs-biosecurity-plants-oak-south-downs-national-park/)

