

DOWNLAND THYMES

NEWS FOR THE SOUTH DOWNS VOLUNTEER
RANGER SERVICE ISSUE 80 | SUMMER 2018

ARE YOU FAMILIAR WITH BETTY MUNDY'S BOTTOM?

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The unusually named Betty Mundy's Bottom is a long valley below a wooded slope on the Preshaw Estate, which is situated near Corhampton in the South Downs National Park in Hampshire.

The origins of this name may date from as far back as 70 AD, when Roman soldiers landing at Southampton moved inland over Corhampton Down and reputedly camped there, calling it Beati Mundae (most beautiful place in the world). But no one can be certain of this theory.

However, I've also heard of other more interesting tales that reveal a far more salacious source of this unusual name...

The most popular legend has it that about two hundred years ago, at a cottage in this valley, there lived a woman of ill repute, known as Betty Mundy. The path that passed her

cottage was a route commonly used by discharged sailors who, no doubt, would often have been carrying their wages. It is said that Betty Mundy lured these weary travellers into her cottage and murdered them, taking their wages and disposing of their bodies down the well in her garden. Indeed, in years to come this track was locally to be known as Sailors Lane.

However, another version of this tale has Betty actually in cahoots with a press gang. In this case, she would use her wiles as temptation to persuade local farm labourers to walk with her in the woods, where the unfortunates would be ambushed and taken into the navy, whilst Betty would receive her commission.

A final myth has Betty being discovered cursing a herd of cattle as some sort of witchcraft, which was a good excuse for a local mob to burn her house down when she was still inside. A subsequent search for the

reputed hoard of gold believed to be hidden there was fruitless.

Who knows if there is truth in any of these tales, but Betty Mundy's Bottom, and her cottage, are still recorded on OS maps to this day.

No one knows whatever happened to Betty but having visited the site recently, it looks as if she must have invested her money wisely... Her 'cottage' is now palatial in scale, with a tennis court, ponds and even a nature trail in the grounds.

But maybe a ghostly sailor still walks around in the wee small hours... perhaps forever searching for his lost money or seeking revenge on the notorious Betty Mundy.

VANESSA HARVEY, VOLUNTEER
RANGER, WESTERN DOWNS



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Main and inset:
Betty Mundy's
Bottom,
Hampshire

Image © Russell Cleaver.
Map © Ordnance Survey

Tell us your story. Email your Downland Thymes articles to the editorial team dt@southdowns.gov.uk



CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

Firstly, thank you to all who braved the cold in mid March to come to our AGM in Petersfield. We had a brilliant day, with some inspiring presentations and learnt much about historic Petersfield. Of note were the words from both the Mayor of Petersfield and Margaret Paren, Chair of the SDNPA, giving their thanks and appreciation for all your hard work.

I'm writing this while sitting at the back of an Introduction Training Day – an event that has changed considerably since I first attended 5 days of initial training. It will continue to develop in light of your recent comments in the volunteer survey which was undertaken at the end of last year. You will also notice some changes developing in your forthcoming volunteering experience as the VRS Committee and the SDNPA staff implement actions stemming from the survey feedback comments.

I'm also aware that the Western Downs volunteers have started organising their annual BBQ event – utilising the £200 grant available from the VRS Committee. Each Area or project volunteer grouping can apply for up to £200 a year to subsidise the cost of mounting a social or other gathering of their volunteers and I would encourage you all to make full use of this. So why not organise something to get to know your fellow volunteers better – have a discussion next time you are out on task and involve your local SDNPA point of contact. That way you'll get to engage with the other volunteers you don't normally meet..

RON WILDER, VRS CHAIR

UPDATE FROM THE VOLUNTEERING TEAM



NEW BLOOD FOR THE VRS!

I AM DELIGHTED TO WELCOME DANIEL GREENWOOD TO THE VOLUNTEERING TEAM.

Daniel comes with a wealth of experience in volunteer management and has personally volunteered across Europe as far as Romania in nature conservation.

Daniel says: 'I have joined the SDNPA after working for the past six years as a Conservation Officer for London Wildlife Trust at Sydenham Hill Wood, a popular woodland nature reserve near Crystal Palace in south-east London. Whilst there I led over 700 workdays with volunteers, undertaking woodland management tasks, surveying bats, birds and butterflies, but also leading over 150 guided walks and talks covering wildlife and local history. I also had the chance to work on the North Downs so I have a good understanding of chalk grassland habitats and species, as well as the management techniques required to conserve them.

I am hugely excited to be working for a National Park and can't wait to meet as many of you as I can. I can see that you have been doing amazing work out there across the South Downs for decades, and I want to be able to help you to enjoy and get stuck into that work as much as I can.



Inset: Daniel Greenwood, SDNPA Volunteer Development Officer

Please do feel free to contact me, I will be spending the next few weeks and months settling into the role, meeting staff, volunteers and project partners across the awe-inspiring landscapes of the South Downs.

I look forward to seeing you soon!

Daniel will be out and about across the National Park meeting volunteer groups in the coming months as well as taking forward the actions in the Volunteer Development Strategy and VRS Survey Action Plan. With 1,600km² of spectacular landscapes to get to grips with and over 450 volunteers to meet there will certainly be plenty to keep him occupied!

AMANDA ELMES, SDNPA LEARNING, OUTREACH & VOLUNTEER LEAD

Hemiaster, found Lullington Heath, 2018
© Ron Wells



SHEPHERD'S CROWNS AND FAIRY LOAVES

A TALE OF INTRIGUING ECHINOIDS.

Many volunteers will have pocketed a flint fossil sea urchin spotted while strolling on the pebble shores that edge much of the Eastern Downs. Freed by waves and weathering from the chalky grip their intrinsic qualities have attracted attention and been a source of fascination since ancient times.

Such specimens, tumbled by waves on the coastal drift, are often smoothed almost beyond recognition. Those found directly from the chalk, however, wherever that may be, retain much more of the once-living form. They can occasionally be found around rabbit and badger diggings and similar disturbed areas. Often the only feature missing is the spines which fell away after death as they do with their present day descendants.

Their folklore associations are many and varied, found across Europe wherever the chalk beds extend. Within the downs they were particularly associated with shepherds who chanced upon them in their work and believed them to be good luck charms. They may have been called 'shepherd's crowns' because the five converging rays of some genera resemble the ribs of a crown. Elsewhere evidence of supposed beneficial properties is suggested by their incorporation en masse in two window surrounds of St. Peter's Church, Linkenholt,

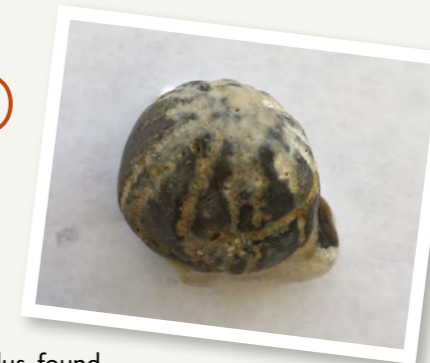
Conulus, found Birling Gap foreshore, 2010
© Ron Wells

Hampshire, a Christian adoption of the pagan belief in their power to ward off the Devil, and the discovery of over 100 in a Bronze Age burial on the Dunstable Downs. Perhaps the Early Palaeolithic owner of the hand axe found near Swanscombe, Kent, its flint incorporating a conulus echinoid, thought it would bring him luck as no doubt did those who used or wore examples found inset into pottery bowls or amulets.

The 'fairy loaves' name doubtless derives from the resemblance of the shape of some species to the simple round loaves almost universal at one time. Sussex cottagers believed one placed by the oven would ensure a good bake whilst another on the window sill could give protection from lightning and witchcraft, predict rain (perhaps from condensation) or just ensure good luck generally.

The two land-found specimens illustrated were both simply lying on the ground so next time you're on your hands and knees cutting scrub keep your eyes peeled and, if you find one, take it home. You can't be too careful!

RON WELLS,
VOLUNTEER RANGER, EASTERN DOWNS



A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Since the last edition of *Downland Thymes* I have had direct experience of volunteering in the South Downs after spending a gloriously sunny day at Lavington Common with the Wealden Heath Team and the Sussex Wildlife Trust. We were clearing and burning rhododendron – a task many of you will be familiar with – and I thoroughly enjoyed the camaraderie of working as part of a team. The task was part of my participation in the John Muir Award – an environmental award scheme that encourages everyone to enjoy wild places, and builds on the work of pioneer conservationist John Muir, whose activism helped create the world's first National Park system. To find out more visit discoverjohnmuir.com.

We would welcome words and/or pictures on anything that you do as a volunteer, or that may be of interest to other Volunteer Rangers. As a guideline, we prefer an article to be no more than 500 words long, but it could be as few as 50 or even less if you've got a couple of good photos.

The **deadline** for submitting articles for the September edition is **18 July**. Please send submissions to dt@southdowns.gov.uk.

CHARLIE HELLEWELL,
EDITOR



John Muir Volunteering task at Lavington Common
© SDNPA

WHAT DO VOLUNTEER RANGERS DO?



The white horse which Graham helped to repair at High and Over, Cuckmere Valley
© 2020 vision Guy Edwardes

I HAVE OFTEN BEEN ASKED WHAT I DO AS A RANGER, SO AFTER NEARLY 40 YEARS OF VOLUNTEERING I THOUGHT I MIGHT GIVE THE ANSWER.



On my first day I chased a cow out of a ditch. I have spent several days on my knees counting plants, and on one snowy day had great fun tobogganing using black plastic sacks. I now know how to dig a deep hole, keep posts upright, make and erect a stile, hang a new gate and dig weed from a pond whilst watching a snake swim on the surface.

There have been special events, like manning the Ranger stand at the wood fair, delivering and erecting a sculpture onto the cliff top of the Seven Sisters Cliffs and taking parties of blind people around the Country Park.

I know how to set, place and light a fire and use a pitching fork to cook sausages. I have bashed scrub, pulled ragwort and used huge wooden rakes. I have helped with fencing and avoided being pronged by coils of barb wire.

You need to speak to the public clearly, give concise directions and explain down land

facts. If you're lucky you can get to lead walks, or take groups of visitors or children to local places of interest.

I like the tasks where you can use woodland skills like coppicing or hedge laying. Less fun are tasks like litter picking or repairing the white horse when you get covered in chalk.

You may also get to drive the land rover (after completing the training course) and then go almost anywhere on the downs. You take charge of ensuring the volunteers get to the work site safely. One Sunday we had a puncture and had to change the wheel at the entrance of some tea rooms.

Two other 'tasks' to mention, looking at the downland views and having fun.

GRAHAM RUTLAND, VOLUNTEER RANGER, EASTERN DOWNS



Scrub bashing at Alfriston
© Sarah Wilson

WORLDWIDE SCRUB BASHING – HAVE LOPPERS, WILL TRAVEL!

AS YOU WIELD LOPPERS OR LUG THE RESULT OF YOUR LABOURS TO THE BONFIRE SPARE A THOUGHT FOR OTHER CONSERVATION VOLUNTEERS.

Across the globe there are many doing the same thing – battling invaders! As travel has become commonplace we find that plant and animal species have hopped on for the ride.

In the UK we concentrate on plants including gorse, blackthorn and invaders such as rhododendron, Japanese knotweed and floating pennywort. We all know of the progress of Dutch elm disease.

Australians are occupied in dealing with other invasive species including olive, fennel, bamboo, lantana and gorse.

New Zealand continually battles wilding conifers, old man's beard, Japanese honeysuckle, buddleia, English ivy and gorse.

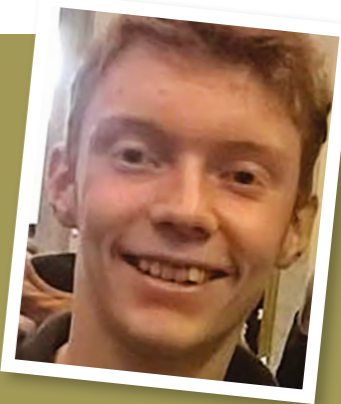
Falkland Islanders have problems including a variety of thistles, *Berberis buxifolia* and yes, gorse.

In the United States much time, effort and dollars is spent in trying to control English ivy, purple loosestrife, Japanese honeysuckle, kudzu, Scotch broom and the invasive gorse.

Gorse has travelled world-wide, often by deliberate invitation for its capacity to grow quickly and to provide effective hedging and animal fodder.

Many of the now unwelcome invaders were introduced as garden plants and some carried fungal disease and insects harmful in their new abode. Change of scenery and climate has often encouraged their spread and luxuriant growth to the detriment of native species. Immigration Officers have to be vigilant in preventing any further importation of invasive species.

SHIRLEY BRICE, VOLUNTEER RANGER, EASTERN DOWNS (SEVEN SISTERS)



Inset: Cameron MacDonald

THOUGHTS OF A NEW VOLUNTEER

Since joining the VRS two years ago I have seen vast swathes of the South Downs and learnt so much about the surrounding area, both things I probably wouldn't have done had I not joined.

Being only 19, I feel it is important to encourage the younger generations, like myself, into the National Park to enjoy its beauty and help conserve it for the future.

I first joined the Volunteer Ranger Service as something to do over the long summer between studying at College and University, but I have since kept it up because I knew it was worth my time to conserve the Park as well as it being interesting and fun.

It wasn't all plain sailing and I wondered in those early days whether I was the right type of person for volunteering. This was due to the first few tasks I ever did, which were at Lancing Ring in mid-summer, digging holes for new dew-pond fence posts. I am not a physically strong person but I willed myself on and since those shaky early days I have come a long way – hedge laying, planting flowers and coppicing trees.

What is more, there is a sense of community and family within the groups. Although I am the youngest of my volunteering group I feel comfortable around the other volunteers as they make me feel welcome, like a family.

I know that over the coming years I will do more in the Park; learning more, experiencing more, and seeing even more of the magnificent area I live in.

CAMERON MACDONALD, VOLUNTEER RANGER, CENTRAL DOWNS

YOUR VRS COMMITTEE

RON WILDER
VRS Committee Chair



WHO AM I?
I work in the Western Area in group work in both practical conservation and the Meon Valley water vole project and also as an individual, as a riverfly monitor. I live in Petersfield, very close to the Heath and I have been a volunteer ranger for nine years.

BACKGROUND/EMPLOYMENT/HOBBIES?
I retired as a Wing Commander from the RAF after 37 years service, having completed many jobs in the UK and overseas, including a full flying career in fast jets – frequently low flying around our National Parks. I became involved with the VRS Committee in 2009 and have served on it in various roles ever since. I am married, with my children having families in Surrey and Berkshire. When not volunteering in some form I am to be found fly fishing on our very splendid National Park chalk streams.

WHAT DOES THE CHAIR DO?
Leads the committee and is the principal point of contact with the SDNPA. I also represent volunteering on the South Downs Partnership, a group of representatives from organisations that support the Purposes and Duty of the Park.

HOW WILL THIS AFFECT YOU?
I seek to move the VRS forward into more diverse roles from a wider volunteer base, whilst reinforcing the ambassadorial work that we all carry out. I want to improve both the experience of volunteers and to increase the impact we have, so that the South Downs can realise the 2050 Vision.

HELENA LEWIS
Volunteer Experience Officer



WHO AM I?
I am a Sunday volunteer ranger in the Central Area. I live on top of the downs, just off the South Downs Way at Truleigh Hill and have been a volunteer ranger for over 20 years.

BACKGROUND/EMPLOYMENT/HOBBIES?
Formerly a nurse in Brighton and abroad I have always loved being in the countryside and meeting others who love it. I started volunteering while working full time with a young family and found it essential to have this “me” time. I am married, have two daughters with families in Wiltshire and Oxfordshire and I am a beekeeper.

WHAT DOES THE VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE OFFICER DO?
Enhances the experience of the volunteers through sourcing discount information, arranging training courses and helping to act on results of VRS survey.

HOW WILL THIS AFFECT YOU?
Through *Downland Thymes* and the VRS Intranet pages we aim to make the work and relevance of the VRS Committee more visible to all the volunteers. So please keep reading and remember it is YOUR committee and your link to the National Park Authority so use us for your ideas and comments so we can act upon them.

MIKE ELLIS
Treasurer



WHO AM I?
I’ve been volunteering for the Western Downs since I retired just over two years ago. I live in Sheet, a village in the National Park adjacent to Petersfield.

BACKGROUND/EMPLOYMENT/HOBBIES?
I originally trained to be a teacher and started with Geography and Outdoor Pursuits before working in Training and Development throughout my career. I’m married with three children. They mostly live away from home; in London, Aberdeen and Portland (Oregon). Fortunately I enjoy travelling! My other interests are skiing, walking and DIY... the latter interest is more of a necessity - we live in an old house that seems to demand a lot of attention.

WHAT DOES THE TREASURER DO?
Essentially I look after the volunteer funds that we have – these are largely derived from donations. There are payments to be made from these funds (agreed by the committee), monies to be paid in, accounts to be monitored and reports to be compiled on a quarterly basis.

HOW WILL THIS AFFECT YOU?
The committee have got funds to benefit the VRS volunteers, for example we support area social functions, subsidise the courses we offer and have the Travel Fellowship Fund.

Additionally, we have funding to support discrete projects managed and delivered by volunteer teams. Our funds tend to grow year by year as they are slightly under-utilised, so if you have a relevant idea that needs funding, do get in touch.

ALAN BIDDLECOMBE
Secretary



WHO AM I?
I have been volunteering in the Western Area for over four years. I live in Sheet, (Petersfield), and walk my dog next to the lovely River Rother almost every day.

BACKGROUND/EMPLOYMENT/HOBBIES?
My teenage years were spent in Devon, where I helped on farms and enjoyed the countryside with many walks on Exmoor and Dartmoor. Training as an engineer I had my first taste of volunteering with VSO for two years in Africa, working as a water technician, where I first discovered the delights of driving Landrovers! I have spent my professional life stuck behind various generations of computers as a Design Engineer, working on Defence and Nuclear Fusion Projects. Latterly, I started a Technical Recruitment Company and retiring from it ten years later. I am also a Parish Councillor for Sheet, where the experience in the VRS has been particularly useful. My responsibilities include looking after Sheet Common. I am married, with two girls, one living in Vancouver, and the other in the smog of London. I enjoy walking my dog, philately and play snooker very badly.

WHAT DOES THE SECRETARY DO?
I try to record accurately the various meetings that the committee attends, and represent the Volunteers that have concerns about their tasks and work.

HOW WILL THIS AFFECT YOU?
I want to promote the profile of the Volunteer Rangers within the SDNP, and represent individuals and groups within the organisation.

INFORMATION
DAY COURSES FOR
SDNPA VOLUNTEERS
IN SEPTEMBER 2018

The VRS Committee is committed to arranging more information seminars and day courses across the National Park for SDNPA volunteers. More are planned for February 2019.

Please get in touch if you have ideas regarding potential speakers or subjects for future events.

HELENA LEWIS, VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE OFFICER, VRS COMMITTEE

SIGN UP FOR ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:

CENTRAL AREA
Saturday 8 September (10:00 – 16:00)

Place: YHA Truleigh Hill, Tottington Barn, South Downs Way, Shoreham-by-Sea BN43 5FB

Subject: South Downs Farmland Bird Monitoring project/habitat

Speaker: Lynn Beun – RSPB Brighton & District Local Group

WESTERN AREA
Thursday 27 September (10:00 – 16:00)

Place: Buriton Village Hall, High Street, Buriton, Petersfield GU31 5RX

Subject: Birds and their habitats in the South Downs National Park

Speaker: Caroline French - Conservation Monitoring Officer RSPB

EASTERN AREA
Saturday 29 September (10:00 – 16:00)

Place: YHA SouthDowns Itford Farm, Beddingham, Lewes BN8 6JS

Subject: South Downs Farmland Bird monitoring project /habitat

Speaker: Lynn Beun – RSPB Brighton & District Local Group

The day will be the usual format of:

- 09:30 – 10:00 Meet for Tea / Coffee / biscuits (provided)
- 10:00 – 12:30 Talk/presentation and discussion (short break included)
- 12:30 – 13:30 Lunch (Please BYO picnic)
- 13:30 – 15:30 Guided local walk

You may attend any one of the above days wherever you live. On receiving your email requesting a place, a £5 payment will confirm your booking. Transport details nearer the time.

Please email Helena Lewis hflewis04@yahoo.co.uk as soon as possible if you would like to attend.



Grey partridge - one of many farmland birds under threat.
© SDNPA Chris Comersall



Beachy Head Woman
© Eastbourne Borough Council

FINDING
BEACHY
HEAD
WOMAN

ALAN JONES WRITES ABOUT
A VRS INFORMATION
DAY HE ATTENDED ON
ARCHAEOLOGY.

I was very pleased to attend an intriguingly titled Heritage Archaeology course in February enabled by Mike Ellis, then VRS Volunteer Experience Officer. On arriving, I was also pleased to see several fellow volunteer rangers.

The first part of the day covered the Eastbourne Ancestors Project run by Heritage Eastbourne during 2012 – 2014 which explored the extensive human skeleton remains with particular reference to our Anglo-Saxon ancestors, possibly the founders of Eastbourne. The second part of the day was concerned with the discovery of the skeletal remains of ‘Beachy Head Woman’, and finally the afternoon saw us on the downs just over a mile from where I live at Butts Brow, a place I have walked over many, many times.

My experience of this foray into the world of archaeology was greatly enhanced by the enthusiasm, inspiration and professionalism of Jo Seaman, Eastbourne’s Heritage Service Manager, the man who delivered the course with such success.

Jo soon captivated us by his account of the “Eastbourne Ancestors” project. In 2011, over 150 skeletons had been excavated in St. Anne’s Road, Eastbourne. True to form, Jo initiated a more ambitious investigation than the original discovery with support

from Eastbourne Borough Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund. We learned so much about the work of osteoarchaeologists and the absorbing results of this investigation can be found at eastbournemuseums.co.uk/ancestors.aspx

‘Beachy Head Woman’ was especially interesting. The best-preserved skeleton, she was a young lady of about 25 years who lived about 125 – 245 AD and her ethnic origins belong in sub-Saharan Africa, way beyond the fringes of the Roman Empire!

The afternoon saw us being guided around Butts Brow on the downs above Eastbourne. Adjacent to the car park is a copse which I have walked through many times. Here, at a mound in the centre of the copse, was an undulation which was once a ditch that encircled the mound. Jo revealed that this was a clear sign of Neolithic activity; he discussed the archaeological work that had already been done on this site and speculated on its possible uses.

Finally, a most interesting discussion of nearby and very visible tumuli completed a most absorbing and satisfying day even if, like all archaeologists, you were left wanting to know more!

ALAN JONES, VOLUNTEER RANGER,
EASTERN DOWNS

BLOODY NOSE AT CHALTON DOWN!

WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT IT? BUT YES, THERE THEY WERE IN THEIR HUNDREDS, IF NOT THOUSANDS.

I mean the bloody nosed beetles, *Timarcha tenebricosa* enjoying the spring sun - in more ways than one!

These beetles are actually quite common and are so named because, if disturbed, they release a blood-red fluid from their mouths. They were moving slowly through the grassland and over the red ant hills. Although at first glance they appear to have wings, the wing cases are actually fused and so they are flightless.

I visited a couple of days ago and it was good to see the results of our volunteering labours - plenty of the yellow flowering "lady's bedstraw" on which they feed and a good few cowslips coming into flower - another triumph for the VRS.

JIM THOMPSON,
VOLUNTEER RANGER,
WESTERN DOWNS



Bloody nosed beetles *Timarcha tenebricosa* © Jim Thompson



Inset: Cobalt Crust, *Terana caerulea* - a striking blue fungus © Jim Thompson

IN EARLY FEBRUARY, THE VRS WERE WORKING ON SCRUB CLEARANCE AT CHALTON DOWN SOUTH OF PETERSFIELD WHEN WE CAME ACROSS QUANTITIES OF A BLUE FUNGUS, COBALT CRUST, TERANA CAERULIA.

The colour is truly remarkable and very distinctive. It is uncommon and was growing on dead clematis and possibly elder.

Apparently in 2009 the German Mycological Society named it "fungus of the year"! I am a regular visitor to Normandy where I am a member of the Linnean Society which meets in Caen and the members there seem to be particularly well informed about fungi. So I decided to take a piece of wood along.

This was seized with enthusiasm by the secretary, Jean-Phillipe Riout who gave a short presentation, noting it was found in the South Downs National Park, before passing it round the audience of about 50 people. Being France the inevitable question was "ce champignon, est-ce que c'est comestible?" I am afraid it was a "Non".

JIM THOMPSON, VOLUNTEER RANGER,
WESTERN DOWNS

ON THE GROUND



Volunteering task at Lavington common © Charlie Hellewell

WE THOUGHT YOU MIGHT LIKE TO SEE WHAT YOUR COMBINED EFFORTS HAVE ACHIEVED IN THE NATIONAL PARK. IN MARCH THE AREA RANGER TEAMS INCLUDING MANY OF YOU VOLUNTEER RANGERS...

- Created a scrape in a lesser-known corner of Heyshott Common and cleared encroaching birch and pine. **Woodlark, common lizard and snipe were seen investigating** the mown area as soon as it was cleared!
- Enhanced the Bentley Station Meadow SSSI with Butterfly Conservation.
- Carried out six **feedback visits with landowners along the River Meon** looking at how to manage vegetation and the river for water voles.
- Attended bird identification training as part of the South Downs Farmland Bird Initiative and met with farmers in the Winchester Downs Cluster group to advise on **locations for lapwing plots** and discuss lapwing

surveys of their land and adding their data to the SDFBI.

- **Cleared invasive rhododendron and felled pine trees from a Bronze Age barrow** on Lavington Common (see image above), a scheduled monument on the at risk register.
- **Continued the fight against invasive rhododendron** at Stedham Common, Ambersham Common and Midhurst Common and cleared invasive non-native bamboo from Botany Bay, Duncton, a rare chalk gill stream site.
- **Completed laying an 80m section of hedge** at Muddy Lane Binsted
- Carried out **annual maintenance of Rother Walk**, including clearing fallen trees, fixing fingerposts and cutting back vegetation.
- Installed a water trough to facilitate conservation grazing at Pepperscoombe.
- Installed a barn owl box at Stansted.
- Supported a community coppice group at Steyning with their first task; completed the 17/18 season's coppicing for pearl

bordered fritillary butterflies at Church Copse; and coppiced for drab looper moth and dormice at Graffham Downs.

- Installed livestock fencing at Rotherfield Park's meadow for grazing and completed fencing in Heyshott to **enable grazing of scheduled monument** by the side of the South Downs Way.
- Held **Dog Patrol weekends with NFU, Lewes District Council and Natural England** at various locations in East Sussex.
- Joined in pole lathe training at Amberley museum – the skills learned will be used in local woodland.
- **Planted 990 chalk grassland plug plants** to improve biodiversity at Lewes Cemetery Local Wildlife Site with help from local school children and Burleys of Lewes.

Your efforts are very much appreciated. To see more On the Ground reports go to southdowns.gov.uk/national-park-authority/our-work/on-the-ground

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.

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.



TRADITIONAL
INN AWARD

THE FOX GOES FREE

Charlton, nr. Goodwood, West Sussex PO18 0HU
thefoxgoesfree.com

The 400-year-old pub – The Fox Goes Free in Charlton is one of the most popular pubs in the SDNP area, and deservedly so. Not only is it ideally placed to start/finish circular walks across Levin Down, it's also close to West Dean Gardens and Goodwood Racecourse. With a beautiful pub garden and a reputation for wonderful food, it's invariably packed, so do book ahead. As if all that wasn't enough,

The Fox Goes Free was also the venue, in 1915, for the first Women's Institute meeting in England – commemorated with a plaque on the wall; and later, in 1974, it hosted Tom Baker's Doctor, the Brigadier and a squad of UNIT troops as Doctor Who fought 'The Terror of the Zygons'.

KAREN MCCREEDY, VOLUNTEER RANGER,
CENTRAL DOWNS

For a circular walk around Levin Down use the Singleton walks leaflet at southdowns.gov.uk/walking



CAPTION COMPETITION



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



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

"THE CONCEPT
OF HIGH TEA WAS
MISUNDERSTOOD
BY THE WESTERN
AREA VRS"

GRAHAM WYNNE, VOLUNTEER RANGER,
WESTERN DOWNS



DID YOU KNOW?

BENEATH TRULEIGH HILL IN WEST SUSSEX LIES AN OLD RAF UNDERGROUND BUNKER.

Initially this was built as a 'Battle of Britain' radar station in 1939 but was upgraded in the 1950s to become a Nuclear Early Warning Station during the Cold War. As such it served as one of a network of stations across the UK, designed to give the "4-minute warning" should nuclear missiles ever be fired at us. Fortunately, this threat never materialised, so the bunker was de-militarised years ago. Above ground, its access building was disguised as an ordinary bungalow – and today this is the only clue to the huge hidden bunker beneath Truleigh Hill.



IF YOU LOVE THE SUSSEX HERITAGE COAST... THEN WE NEED YOUR HELP

The Sussex Heritage Coast Partnership wants to know what you feel are the 'special qualities' of the landscape between Seaford and Eastbourne. They will then use this to tell its story to future generations in new ways, based on the thoughts and feelings of those that know it best. The establishment of the special qualities will help inform and prioritise future work throughout the Heritage Coast.

If you missed the workshops held in May there is still an opportunity to have your say and tell us what you feel is special about the Heritage Coast through the online questionnaire at surveymonkey.co.uk/r/sussexcoast

THANKS IN ADVANCE FOR YOUR HELP



SDNPA SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES FUND



Are you aware of any projects in your local area aiming to bring social, environmental, economic or cultural benefits to a community in the National Park? Did you know that they may be eligible to receive up to 50% of the project cost from £250 to a maximum of £10,000 from the SDNPA's Sustainable Communities Fund? If you think this project might meet the criteria then get in touch with the External Funding Co-ordinator on 01730 819219 or grants@southdowns.gov.uk.

Please note that the criteria of the fund are regularly reviewed and may change without notice. The National Park Authority is not obliged to consider applications under criteria which were in place when an enquiry or expression of interest was made.

A NEW BRIDGE FOR BOTANY BAY

A LOCAL EXAMPLE OF A RECIPIENT OF SDNPA'S SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY FUND IS BOTANY BAY, A TINY CHALK VALLEY NEAR DUNCTON IN WEST SUSSEX OWNED BY FOUR SISTERS.

In 2014 they decided to restore the site, once home to a trout farm, setting up a Community Interest Group to manage it as a nature reserve and help open it up for local schools.

It took five skips to remove the pipes, corrugated iron and other rubbish from the 10-acre site, followed by clearing invasive bamboo and cherry laurel. But after a lot of hard work – including support from National Park rangers and the trusty South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service – the chalk stream is running clear, ancient woodland is recovering, local school children are able to come pond-dipping and thriving river-fly populations reflect improving water quality.

The native brown trout population is growing and the site has recently been awarded a Wild Trout Trust/Thames Water conservation award.

Thanks to £10,000 from the SDNPA's Sustainable Community Fund they are replacing an old, unsafe bridge and building a new outdoor learning shelter to help open up the site to local primary schools and, in the longer term offer adult courses .

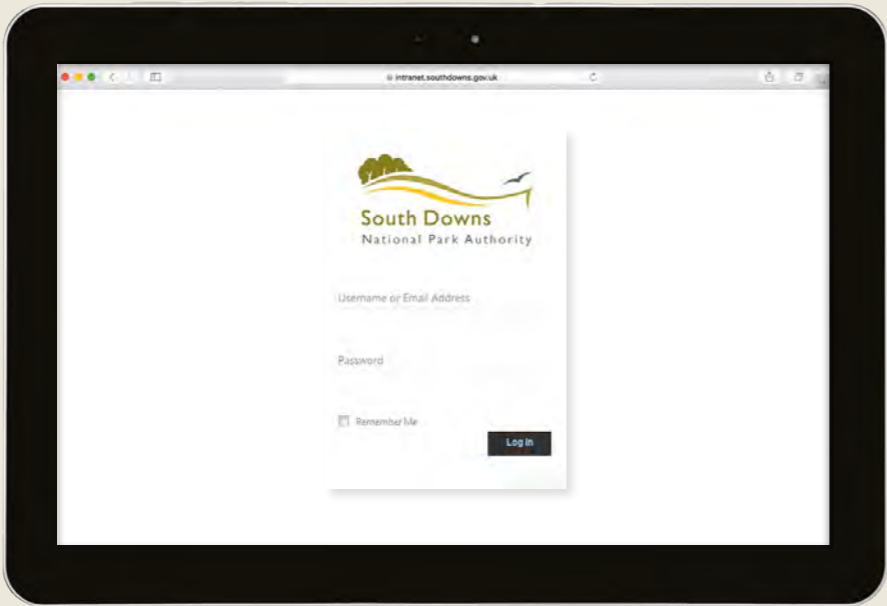
JO GLYDE
SENIOR MEDIA OFFICER, SDNPA

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.



ACCESSING THE INTRANET

THE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY INTRANET CONTAINS A LOT OF USEFUL INFORMATION, DOCUMENTS AND CONTACTS THAT VOLUNTEERS MAY WANT TO ACCESS.

You can also find details and minutes of the VRS committee which meets to discuss strategic volunteering issues, as well as a list of discounts offered to members of the VRS. Past issues of Downland Thymes are also available here.

All volunteers are able to access the intranet using their own personalised login. If you have not been given one, or do not remember your username and/or password, please contact vrs@southdowns.gov.uk and you will either be set up with a new one, or have your password reset and emailed to you.

In order to access the Intranet, visit intranet.southdowns.gov.uk/vrs. Once this loads you should see the login form as shown above, enter your username and password and you will be logged in. Again, if you have any difficulties logging in, please contact vrs@southdowns.gov.uk

JOIN THE SOUTH DOWNS NEWSLETTER

Want to know more about what is happening in your National Park?

Sign up for our monthly newsletter for the latest South Downs news, stories, ideas for days out, competitions, to hear about our ranger and volunteers' work and much, much more...

southdowns.gov.uk/join-the-newsletter





Main photo and inset: The Central Downs Sunday Volunteer Rangers with Neil Hulme at Charlton Forest.



Cleared areas where violets may emerge, encourage the scarce pearl-bordered fritillary butterfly © Neil Hulme

FLINT THROWING AND BUTTERFLIES CHARLTON FOREST

ON A REALLY COLD FROSTY FEBRUARY DAY THE CENTRAL AREA SUNDAY VOLUNTEERS MET UP WITH NEIL HULME FROM BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION (BC) ON THE SOUTH DOWNS WAY ABOVE COCKING.

After his brief chat about the plan for this area, we quickly walked down a track to the first "scrape" which had been cleared by the Forestry Commission. They use the timber commercially so do not have the inclination to remove the brash and flint stones from the area. These areas are chosen to encourage the pearl-bordered fritillary butterfly which is almost extinct and needs corridors of suitable open areas where violets will emerge.

Neil wanted us to get warm by lifting and throwing aside the large flint stones and wooden branches which littered the area. At least this was a different task from usual coppicing or scrub bashing and we soon warmed up and moved onto the next "scrape" finally ending up having our coffee in a "box junction" as Neil called it, where there are four cleared areas between the paths. It was a beautiful sunny but very cold day with views down the rides in the forest

and we must have walked a couple of miles before we ended up back at the Land Rover and on our way home for a hot bath and a strong drink. All in all, a very informative, interesting and satisfying day.

Thank you to BC's Neil Hulme and SDNPA Assistant Ranger Bekah Smith.

**HELENA LEWIS, VOLUNTEER RANGER,
CENTRAL DOWNS**



**SOUTH DOWNS
VOLUNTEER
RANGER SERVICE**

**SOUTH DOWNS
NATIONAL PARK**

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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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