

DOWNLAND THYMES

NEWS FOR THE SOUTH DOWNS VOLUNTEER RANGER SERVICE ISSUE 82 | WINTER 2018



NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL STILE-ISH!

STILES HAVE BEEN A FEATURE OF THE COUNTRYSIDE FOR CENTURIES, PROBABLY SINCE ANIMALS WERE FIRST ENCLOSED FOR DOMESTIC USE.

The word 'stile' is Saxon in origin. Stiles vary in form and material with the most ingenious surely being the Tumble Down, or Clapper, version. It's thought the design was intended to blend almost seamlessly with a three-bar fence.

They're unusual everywhere but especially so on the South Downs, probably because they can't be made lamb proof, but our National Trust partners boasted an example at Frog Firle near Alfriston. This deteriorated beyond repair recently and a replacement made

by the local volunteer woodworking team has been installed. Both the making and installation were precision jobs and, by my reckoning, at least six standard stile kits could have been put together in the time but not, I'm sure, with the same satisfaction.

It gives access to an area much used by school groups for pond dipping and negotiating it will no doubt add to the fun.

RON WELLS, VOLUNTEER RANGER, EASTERN DOWNS

"He lolls upon each resting stile
To see the fields so sweetly smile
To see the wheat grow green and long
And list the weeders toiling song"

(From May, John Clare 1793-1864)

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EUROPARC CONFERENCE

Main: Ron testing the new 'tumble down' stile at Frog Firle. © Ron Wells

Left: Under construction © Ron Wells



CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

As we move towards the end of the year it is worth remembering what we have all achieved – increased the diversity of our volunteer roles through the Heathlands Reunited Project, expanded river-fly monitoring and added new faces to support public engagement events. All of this is set alongside our traditional outdoor conservation work and to enhance that the VRS Committee has decided to implement a new strategy for using the Conservation Reserve funds we hold. These will be held in future by the South Downs National Park Trust, to support projects that offer VRS involvement in some way and which are contributors to the outcomes of the Park's Partnership Management Plan – more on this on pages 14-15.

The VRS Committee has also started planning for the AGM in 2019, which will be hosted by the Wealden Heaths Area and held on 30 March at the South Downs Centre, Midhurst – more details to follow later. However, we will be seeking to elect a new Secretary at this AGM, so if you are interested or can suggest someone please do contact me or any member of the committee. The post is not onerous and entails publishing our meeting agenda and keeping a record of what we decide – not much more.

The past year has seen a wet winter that led into one of the warmest summers ever, I've been impressed with you all for braving wet windy days and long, extremely hot days to get our tasks complete. We also now have new operating bases for the Central, Eastern and Western Downs volunteers. These improved facilities at Weald and Downland Living Museum, Stanmer Park and Wallops Wood will now see the Rangers and ourselves working together from the same site, thus improving communication and understanding for everyone involved.

Finally, let me wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

RON WILDER, VRS CHAIR

UPDATE FROM THE VOLUNTEERING TEAM



IN SEPTEMBER I ATTENDED THE EUROPARC CONFERENCE IN THE CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK WITH OUR EDUCATION OFFICER JONATHAN DEAN AND TWO OF OUR YOUNG VOLUNTEERS, KIRSTY FERRIS AND CAMERON MACDONALD.

The conference aim was to unite protected landscape organisations across Europe, this time focusing on the theme of young people. Some of Europe's finest and most biologically-rich landscapes were represented amongst the 600 delegates: the Bavarian Forest, the Great Hungarian Plain and UK National Parks such as the Yorkshire Dales and the New Forest to name a few.

A delegation of young people aged between 18 and 30 were present to deliver the EUROPARC youth manifesto, aiming to give a greater say to young people in the direction of

European protected landscape areas. Youth ambassadors highlighted the lack of available jobs, housing and transport links meaning they are forced to leave home towns and villages behind for cities. It's a trend that is impacting our protected landscapes across the continent and urgent action is required to ensure the rangers, education and volunteering officers of the future can live in and access rural places of work.

Our young volunteers took great inspiration from the amazing landscapes of the Cairngorms National Park –read their account of the conference on the back page. We too were inspired by their input as volunteers in our very own South Downs and by their passion for increasing the influence of young people in all areas of how our National Park plans and delivers. From speaking to Cameron and Kirsty I felt a strong sense that young people are not well represented in our National Park and we need to do more to give them a voice. Many of you have spoken to me about the obstacles for young people in both accessing the National Park and being involved in volunteering and I know there are volunteers passionate about ensuring the next generation are there to take over the positive action that is being delivered across the South Downs.

We plan to begin the process of giving young people a voice in our National Park by creating a new volunteer role for youth ambassadors. This will be open to young people between the age of 18-30 registered with the Volunteer Ranger Service or as a volunteer with one of our partner organisations within the South Downs. If you are interested in learning about this role please get in touch.

Over the summer we have been working hard to bring in a new management system that securely stores your data. The majority of group emails you now receive are from that system and are GDPR compliant. The system also allows us to capture details of all the work undertaken, as well as providing

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Autumn and winter is a great time to get out and about in the South Downs, to walk some unfamiliar trails or to discover a previously unknown pub. After such a glorious summer it seems hard for me to accept the cooler, darker, damper months but in fact there are many delights – whether it be kicking the leaves, partaking in a fungi foray or trying to identify some of our winter migrant birds. It's always worth making the effort to get out.

This edition we have reports from some of you who have done just that – whether it be as part of your role as Volunteer Ranger, helping us to keep the South Downs looking as beautiful as we can, or as other forays to keep fit such as running the South Downs Way. This year I completed the John Muir Award encompassing the heathland area of the National Park and volunteers are now being invited to give it a try in 2019. I urge volunteers to consider having a go if you think it might fit in with your schedule. See page 14 for more details.

I would like to welcome Alan Jones from the Eastern Downs VRS who has recently joined the editorial team to help round up stories for your *Downland Thymes*. He, and Russell Cleaver from the West, are an invaluable link to you and your endeavours. Please do get in touch if you have something you would like to see included. The deadline for the March issue will be **January 24**. In the meantime I wish you all a very Happy Christmas.



CHARLIE HELLEWELL,
EDITOR DOWNLAND THYMES

information on how many hours have been completed, even focusing on hours to task, site and partnership contributions. We are still inputting the backlog of task day forms – thank you to our data entry volunteers Liz Bounton and Nicki Tulett for their support with this – but in time we will be able to provide you with information on your hours.

Thank you to everyone who has volunteered for the South Downs National Park in 2018, your contribution to the protection and enhancement of the National Park and our purposes are greatly appreciated. From all of us in the Volunteering Team we wish you a merry and peaceful Christmas and New Year.

See you in 2019.

DANIEL GREENWOOD, SDNPA VOLUNTEER
DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

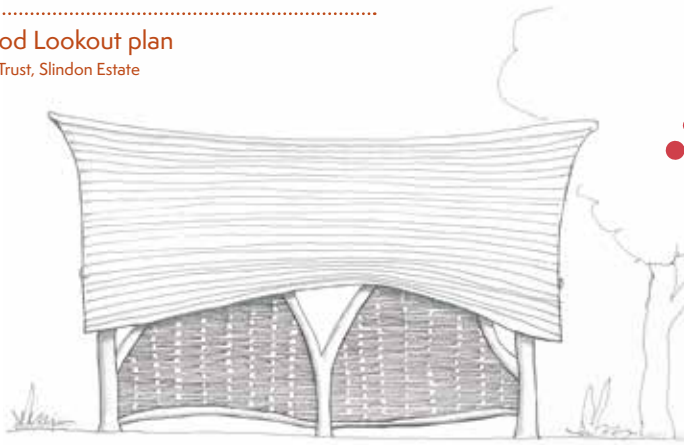
Europarc expedition group. Balmoral,
Cairngorms National Park.

© Daniel Greenwood



Littlewood Lookout plan

© National Trust, Slindon Estate



VRS HELP TO BUILD LITTLEWOOD LOOKOUT



AT THE END OF JULY THE CENTRAL DOWNS FRIDAY VOLUNTEERS MET UP WITH A SMALL NATIONAL TRUST (NT) TEAM AT NORTHWOOD ON THE SLINDON ESTATE FOR A FASCINATING DAY'S WORK HELPING THE 'ARTIZANS OF WOOD' TO CONSTRUCT A ROUND-WOOD TIMBER BUILDING.

The shelter once complete will provide a handsome rest area for users of the estate (including animals!), a lookout point, as well as interpretation for the Rise of the Northwood development.

We were introduced to the ancient craft of lath making. These are lengths of wood (sweet chestnut) used as panels to help form the walls of the new timber structure. Led by Tom and Gabby we were expertly shown how to take a log of chestnut and turn it into useable lengths for laths, while keeping the pile of spoiled wood to a minimum!

The first step involved stripping the bark from the roughly metre length logs with a drawknife. Then the log was split using an L-shaped tool called a froe (a horizontal blade with an upright wooden handle). A mallet is used to force the froe into the end of the log and the froe is manipulated along the log's length to split it (making sure the log is split evenly is easier said than done!)

The split log is then split further until you have many lengths of chestnut of suitable width.

The next stage involves "shaving" the rough surface of the laths using a shave horse (see pictures) which is a sit-down device enabling the lath to be held securely while smoothing it with the drawknife.

For me this was the most satisfying part of the whole procedure, almost relaxing into a rhythm and (hopefully) ending up with the finished article – laths which are smooth and pliable but strong enough to weave using stakes into a rudimentary wall.

The timber structure, to be called 'Littlewood Lookout', is officially opening on Saturday 1st December. We had a great day at Northwood with thanks to the National Trust team for their help and guidance.

GREG TAMLYN, VOLUNTEER RANGER, CENTRAL DOWNS



For more detail visit riseofnorthwoodnt.wordpress.com. This is a project part funded by the SDNPA Sustainable Communities Fund (SCF). For more detail about the SCF contact the External Funding Co-ordinator on 01730 819219 or grants@southdowns.gov.uk for more details.

Yellowhammer
at Gander Down
© John Walton

SOUTH DOWNS FARMLAND BIRD INITIATIVE TRAINING DAY

ON A BEAUTIFUL SUNNY SEPTEMBER DAY, A SELECT GROUP OF NINE VOLUNTEER RANGERS GATHERED FOR A STUDY DAY AT THE PICTURESQUE SOUTH DOWNS YOUTH HOSTEL IN BEDDINGHAM NEAR LEWES.

Speaker Lynn Beun, Leader of the Brighton & District Local RSPB Group gave an extremely interesting and informative presentation on the South Downs Farmland Bird Initiative (SDFBI).

The SDFBI is a collaborative partnership between farmers, conservation organisations and Government Agencies, led by the Sussex Ornithological Society. Partners include the RSPB, Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust, SDNPA, South Downs Land Managers and Natural England. Its objective is to encourage integration of conservation management into the modern farm.

Since the 1970s we have seen a dramatic decline in the numbers of farmland birds nationally, with 12 species being red listed as severe (at least 50%). These include lapwings, yellowhammers, skylarks, corn buntings, and most alarmingly, turtle doves (in excess of 90% and facing extinction). Lynn described her part in the SDFBI – walking a specific farm area in the National Park and counting the breeding birds. Interestingly, recent data shows local bird populations are relatively stable despite the need for national and international red listing.

We learned that reasons for the decline are multiple. These include loss of mixed farming, resulting in loss of habitat; increased pesticides; changes of crops and grassland management; larger fields (loss of nesting and weedy insect rich field margins); and improved field drainage causing removal of wetlands.

The South Downs is a predominantly farmed landscape. The SDFBI initiative encourages wildlife farming methods including hedgerows and shrubs/trees; arable crops mixed with other farming; wildlife areas sown with seed; field margins sown with wildflower seeds; skylark plots (drilled areas); winter cereal fields; fields left fallow and over-winter stubble. In addition to farmland birds, this also benefits a host of other species including rare arable plants, mammals such as brown hares, butterflies, insects and wildflowers.

Another source of optimism is the research taking place into new farming techniques at the RSPB's Hope Farm in Cambridgeshire aimed at helping both farmers and wildlife. Since 2000, numbers of breeding farmland birds at the site, particularly skylarks, have seen a steady rise.



Sunflowers and quinoa in a field margin
© SDNPA Nick Heasman

Following Lynn's presentation we had a lively quiz on farmland bird issues, species recognition and bird calls.

Organiser Helena Lewis followed up with a thoughtful presentation on specific downland birds with informative and interesting facts and slides.

In the afternoon we set off up the hill towards Firle Beacon in the glorious autumn sunshine. Notwithstanding the problems faced by farmland birds generally, we were able to spot a good range of species including rooks, skylarks, jackdaws, buzzard, kestrel, starlings, linnets, sparrows, pied wagtails and an egret by the river – and we even heard a great spotted woodpecker.

Our thanks go to Lynn and Helena for a highly successful, informative and enjoyable study day.

**JANET CONSIDINE, VOLUNTEER RANGER
EASTERN DOWNS**

Look out for other training days which might be of interest to you. Contact Helena Lewis, Volunteer Experience Officer, VRS Committee if you have ideas for subject matter.



AGRICULTURAL WEEDS: WHEN THE INSIGNIFICANT BECOMES EXTRAORDINARY

ONE DAY IN SEPTEMBER, I HAD A DECISION TO MAKE: WHETHER TO ATTEND ANOTHER TASK DAY PULLING HIMALAYAN BALSAM (A MUCH LOVED FRIEND – SEE PAGE 7) OR GO ON A TRAINING DAY TO STUDY AGRICULTURAL WEEDS (HOW NERDISH CAN A SUBJECT BE?). WHAT THE HECK, I THOUGHT, I'LL DO THE COURSE – I CAN'T FACE ANY MORE BALSAM.

It proved a wise decision, for once I heard the introduction to the course by Dr. Phil Wilson I was immediately hooked. He explained that our so-called agricultural weeds were amongst the most endangered plants in the UK. We soon went to search for some remaining species in the nearby farmland, it appears that the field verges of arable fields on the chalk downs are good places to find them. Apparently modern farming practises, with computer aided seed-sowing and pesticide spraying, is often so precise that such verges act as good harbours for plants that have been eradicated within crop fields.

We quickly discovered what I thought were some insignificant weeds, or wild flowers as we must now call them. Then I learnt of their extraordinary survival, despite intensive agriculture's best efforts to extinguish them. Dr Phil explained to us that many of these plants are annual species that have evolved various strategies for surviving in our modern, sterile field environs. For example, some set seed that can lie dormant in soils for years, even decades, until the ideal conditions return when they can quickly germinate and grow.

And interestingly, you may well recognise some of their names: e.g. fat hen, buckwheat

and knot grass. These were once food plants from our agricultural past, along with others used medically or otherwise, such as mugwort, dwarf spurge and flax. These are all native, or long naturalised, plants in our landscape – 'heritage plants' if you will. Before the development of modern cereal crops, these plants were commonplace, yet are increasingly rare, unnoticed and unrecognised. But as we found on this successful training day, such plants cling on in field corners and verges of arable crops, just waiting for their time to come.

There is a corollary to this tale, for the very next day I went for a walk in the fields near my home where I noticed a change in my local scenery. What last year had been a field of barley, had now been supplanted by rows of newly planted vines. Yet between the young vines was a plant I immediately recognised from the day before: in front of my eyes, I was witnessing a flush of flowering fat hen. I felt like I was welcoming a new friend.

So it is a big thank you to Dr Phil Wilson, and to Jayne Chapman of Butterfly Conservation for organising this remarkable training day.

RUSSELL CLEAVER
VOLUNTEER RANGER, WESTERN DOWNS



Himalayan Balsam

© Jim Thompson

THE HIMALAYAN BALSAM – A MUCH LOVED FRIEND!

Introduced to the UK in 1839, Himalayan balsam is now a naturalised plant. This invasive species tolerates low light levels and also shades out other vegetation, gradually impoverishing habitats. Himalayan balsam is a tall-growing annual, 2–3m in height. Between June and October it produces clusters of purplish pink helmet-shaped flowers. The flowers develop into seed pods that open explosively when ripe.

Each plant can produce up to 800 seeds and shoot them up to 7 metres away. The seeds can remain viable for only up to 2 years so fortunately, any seedbank is limited. Once established, the seeds, can be transported further afield by water. Pulling and brush cutting do seem to be effective in control and, on the Rother and the Meon rivers, the benefits of control by the VRS are now clearly evident.

In April 2000, the Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management ran a conference entitled *Exotic Invasive Species – should we be concerned?* Ian Rotherham from Sheffield Hallam University gave a paper: *Himalayan balsam – the human touch*. He described how people have reacted to the plant, quoting a number of authors.

Sir Joseph Hooker, Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, described it in

the 19th century as: 'A terror to botanists, deceitful above all plants, and desperately wicked'. By contrast Gwynn Ellis (1993) describes Himalayan balsam as: 'arguably one of our most attractive plants and with the added interest of exploding fruits'. That is the basis of our problem – as Ian Rotherham put it – people like it!

No one appears to have liked it as much as a lady in Surrey who in the 1990s received seeds from a neighbour's garden. These were to be put to good use – such as:

- introduced to 'spare land';
- given away to passers-by;
- bag of seeds to a market gardener friend in Ireland;
- given to a work colleague to introduce to a stream behind her garden;
- introduced to local woods and
- carried on holidays to France and Spain.

So a toast to this lady and others for providing the VRS and possibly others in France and Spain with such 'fun'!

JIM THOMPSON,
VOLUNTEER RANGER, WESTERN DOWNS



THE ARIEGE RE-VISITED

IN 2017 WE RECEIVED A BURSARY FROM THE VRS TRAVEL FELLOWSHIP SCHEME TO FIND OUT INFORMATION ABOUT THE PARC NATUREL OF THE ARIEGE PYRENEES (SEE DOWNLAND THYMES AUTUMN 2017) THIS YEAR WE RETURNED TO LOOK AT THREE AREAS OF INTEREST WHILE ON HOLIDAY.

Firstly we studied the plants of the Plantaurel (limestone outcrops in the foothills of the Pyrenees) to see how they compared with the chalk hills of the Eastern Downs – both areas are hill grasslands used for grazing animals. Taking lists of flowers found in both areas, provided by the Ariège Naturalists Association (ANA) and Patrick Coulcher in his book *Unto the Hills: The History and Wildlife of the South Downs*, we found that 30% of the flowers listed in the book are found in the ANA list.

Shrub cutting occurs in both the Plantaurel and the South Downs to preserve the grassland and particularly in the case of the Plantaurel to advance the cause of hill farming. The ANA informed us that shrub cutting is carried out by farmers who receive payment for their work from the EU at a rate of about 640 euros/hectare. Cutting is not indiscriminate as the protection of threatened species needs to be considered. For example, extensive cutting has

left the lizard ocellé dangerously exposed to birds making it an endangered species. There is now one area of the Plantaurel which is not cut and contains one of the few remaining populations of the lizard in the world.

The caves of the Mas d'Azil are famous for art work produced by prehistoric people up to 30,000 years ago, however this year we were more interested in their large population of bats. Here the bats have space to follow their chosen flight paths to find their insect food. As in the South Downs, efforts are being made to understand how best to preserve flight paths by preventing human activity interfering with their search for insect food, such as working with farmers to reduce the use of pesticides which can reduce insect quantities.

On this trip we were also interested in the "Maisons du Parc" – 12 resource centres organised by the Parc to offer the opportunity to discover the cultural and environmental riches of the Ariège. Among them is one called "Exploria" which has a nature trail charting the development of early plants and animals through the age of the dinosaurs up to the present age. This really helps to give visitors perspective of the landscape they're visiting.

In conclusion we would say that the Travel Fellowship Scheme from the VRS gave us an insight into a fascinating area of France and we would recommend all volunteers to take advantage of this valuable opportunity.

BRIAN AND JOAN WIGNALL
VOLUNTEER RANGERS,
EASTERN DOWNS



Travel Fellowship Scheme

The Scheme offers a single award every two calendar years of up to £500 to cover costs, in whole or part, of travel by a member of the South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service to seek out new initiatives and areas of conservation at home or abroad in other protected, lived-in landscapes such as National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Visit the volunteer Intranet pages for more information.

RUNNING THE SOUTH DOWNS WAY



HAVING TAKEN A BREAK FROM THE LONDON MARATHON THIS YEAR I DECIDED TO TAKE ON A NEW SUMMER CHALLENGE TO MOTIVATE ME TO GET UP AND RUN ON SUNDAY MORNINGS.

Having been a volunteer on the South Downs for 11 years I thought it was about time I experienced the whole of the South Downs Way and what better way than to run it – not all in one go but in 17 separate stages.

So I started this year on 20 May from the Winchester end and finally completed it on the 23 September, with my last stretch being along the Devil's Dyke. I started it in glorious hot weather and finished it in heavy rain, wind and mist, although it did improve and I was able to see the sea! Even better my sister came down specifically from Cumbria to complete the last stage with me.

There were so many beautiful stretches such as Butser Hill, Harting Down, Chanctonbury Ring, Firle Beacon, Ditchling Beacon and Devil's Dyke – all with amazing views. That said, I think the spectacular Seven Sisters and across to Eastbourne was my favourite.

There is nothing more exhilarating than running along cliffs with the sea on one side and a strong sea breeze blowing in your face!

I did take a couple of tumbles, twisted an ankle and scraped knees, with scars still visible! However, I believe in total I ran up at least the equivalent of Everest and I now feel a great sense of achievement having completed it. Most importantly I enjoyed it, and now appreciate how beautiful (and hilly) the South Downs are, but I think what I loved most was the fact that at each stage I was always able to see the sea.

So now to my next challenge...

DIANA JORDAN
VOLUNTEER RANGER,
WESTERN DOWNS



Main: A slight detour from the SDW to climb/run Beacon Hill in Sussex.

© Diana Jordan

Above: Towards Birling Gap from Eastbourne © Diana Jordan



DID YOU KNOW? LEWES – SITE OF BRITAIN'S WORST AVALANCHE DISASTER



Painting of the
Lewes avalanche
by kind permission Sussex
Archaeological Society

IF YOU WERE ASKED “WHERE DID BRITAIN’S WORST AVALANCHE OCCUR?” YOU WOULD PROBABLY, AND QUITE REASONABLY ASSUME IT WOULD HAVE BEEN IN THE HIGHLANDS OF SCOTLAND OR IN THE LAKE DISTRICT OR EVEN PERHAPS THE VERTIGINOUS MOUNTAINS OF WALES.

It might, therefore, come as a bit of a surprise to know that the worse avalanche ever experienced in Britain happened in Lewes in our own South Downs.

The winter of 1836 had been particularly harsh and as Christmas approached a snow storm raged along the South Coast. It worsened over the Christmas period. The force of the wind heaped snow against Cliffe Hill which rises high above sea level and dominates the eastern vista of Lewes along the banks of the River Ouse. Immediately below the cliff was Boulder Row which included a number of workers cottages. On December 27 at 10:15am, possibly due to a slight thaw, the huge cornice of snow that had developed suddenly collapsed producing a catastrophic avalanche which crashed down directly onto the occupied Boulder Row cottages.

Brave efforts by people of the town succeeded in pulling seven survivors from the wreckage, their efforts interrupted by a second snow slide which temporarily buried one of the rescuers. Sadly, however, eight occupants were found dead.

A fund was set up by ‘prominent townspeople’ to provide financial assistance to the families of the deceased. The funerals and burials took place at South Malling Parish Church, a short distance from the scene and a commemorative plaque was placed here.

A pub aptly named Snowdrop Inn was built in what is now South Street on the site once occupied by Boulder Row and still exists and trades today.

DAVID GIBSON
VOLUNTEER RANGER, CENTRAL DOWNS



Snowdrop Inn Lewes



PIC IN THE PARK

The South Downs contain many waymarked walks to enjoy and the Hangers Way is just one of them. This path explores one of the quieter regions of the National Park. As it winds its way north from Petersfield to Alton, the Hangers Way follows the convoluted chalk escarpment of the East Hampshire Hangers. This photo looks north from Ashford Hangers towards Noar Hill and Selborne.

www.hants.gov.uk/thingstodo/countryside/walking/hangersway.



Hangers Way

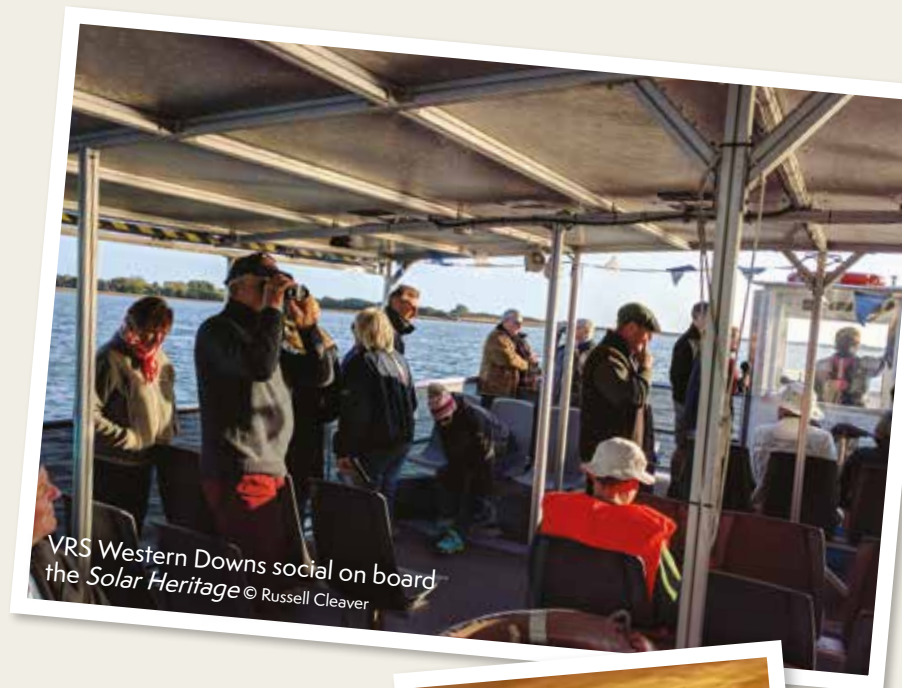
CHICHESTER HARBOUR BOAT TRIP, A VRS SUMMER SOCIAL

ON THE PENULTIMATE DAY OF SEPTEMBER, THE WESTERN DOWNS VRS ENJOYED A MAGICAL EVENING EXPLORING CHICHESTER HARBOUR BY BOAT.

We drifted along almost in silence on the *Solar Heritage*, a solar powered catamaran, while admiring the wildlife and scenery of this lovely estuary – enjoying what seemed like the last clear-blue sky of summer.

As it turned out, we had picked an evening of near perfect conditions with lots of interest on the calm waters from curlews, terns and other seabirds as well as the occasional bemused seal.

This was a social evening of sheer bliss during which, as the sun began its descent, we watched the seascape turn gold and then red. After our boat had gently glided back into the harbour at Itchenor we dispersed into various pubs around the estuary, not wishing the evening to end.



VRS Western Downs social on board the *Solar Heritage* © Russell Cleaver

This was one of our most popular VRS events ever, so thanks go to Graham Wynne for casting the spell that created this memorable evening.

NEVILL BROOKE, VOLUNTEER RANGER, WESTERN DOWNS

Don't forget the VRS has an annual grant allocation of £200 for area or specialist project teams to put towards a social gathering / BBQ or visit. Get in touch with the committee for more details.



Sunset on Chichester harbour © Nevill Brooke



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.

THE TIGER INN, EAST DEAN, EAST SUSSEX, BN20 0BY

The Tiger Inn is a traditional pub on an idyllic village green, renovated from 18th Century buildings as shown by its low ceilings and beams. It welcomes walkers and is within easy walking distance of both Beachy Head and the famous Seven Sisters cliffs. It serves a wide range of real ales including those from the local Long Man brewery which is a particular favourite of mine.

It serves good pub food and has been awarded the CAMRA Country Pub of the Year Winner Award for both 2016 and 2017. Dogs are welcome in the main bar area.

beachyhead.org.uk/the-tiger-inn

ALAN JONES, VOLUNTEER RANGER, EASTERN DOWNS

TRADITIONAL INN AWARD



© Alan Jones

Try the circular walk around Beachy Head and Birling Gap which passes the Tiger Inn

SOUTH DOWNS WALKS
HERITAGE COAST



SNOWMAN CHRISTMAS DECORATION

1. To create a Christmas table decoration of approx. 18" high (46cm).
2. Cut three slices of wood, two approx. 7" dia. (one for the body and one for a stand) and cut one of 5" dia. for the head. To make his hat, cut two smaller pieces to fit as shown. Use a variety of buttons and baubles, or small pine cones, for his features. Note, for the snowman's mouth and arm I used bent twigs. To affix them all I used either nails, screws or glue, whichever seemed convenient.

3. However, to fix the three wooden slices and the hat together I drilled and fitted dowel rods between each part.
4. If you want a larger, outdoor decoration then use larger diameter slices and add an extra section in the body to increase the total height.

RUSSELL CLEAVER, VOLUNTEER RANGER
WESTERN DOWNS



CAPTION COMPETITION

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



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

"I'M SORRY YOU'RE WRONG. THAT IS DEFINITELY NOT STONEHENGE..."

JILL SEENEY, VOLUNTEER RANGER
(BY THE POOL IN TURKEY!)



CHRISTMAS COOKING

RECIPES TO INSPIRE YOUR FESTIVE FEASTING...

CHRISTMAS CRANBERRY BOMBE

I don't know about your family but mine, which includes two large lads with good appetites, are not great lovers of traditional Christmas Pudding. They often prefer something a little lighter to allow room for a 'tea' coming early evening. We think this fits the bill:

Ingredients (serves 6)

Outer layer

1 pint vanilla ice cream (softened)
2tbsp chopped Angelica
2tbsp candied citrus rind
1tbsp slivered almonds, toasted.

Sorbet Centre

8oz fresh or frozen cranberries
1/4 pint orange juice
Finely grated rind of 1/2 orange
1/2 tsp allspice
4tbsp sugar

Method

1. Stir the angelica, peel and almonds into the ice cream
2. Use a metal spoon to pack the mixture into a 5 cup basin, hollowing out the centre.
3. Freeze for approx. 3 hours
4. Heat the cranberries, juice, rind and spice in a pan until soft. Add the sugar and blitz until almost smooth. Allow to cool.
5. Fill the hollowed centre of the bombe with the cranberry mix and freeze until firm.
6. To serve – Remove from the freezer and while the bombe softens slightly, make some tipsy yoghurt (Mix 4 tbsp honey, 3 tbsp brandy, orange zest and 1/2pt Greek yoghurt) to serve with it.
7. Turn out of the basin onto a plate and slice. Happy Christmas!



WITH THANKS TO
ALAN AND JANE JONES

EARN A JOHN MUIR AWARD IN 2019

THE JOHN MUIR AWARD IS AN ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD SCHEME. IT'S AN INITIATIVE OF THE JOHN MUIR TRUST, WHO WORK TO DEFEND WILD LAND, ENHANCE HABITATS AND ENCOURAGE PEOPLE OF ALL AGES AND BACKGROUNDS TO CONNECT WITH WILD PLACES.

John Muir was an explorer, mountaineer, conservationist, botanist, amateur geologist and writer of distinction. His activism saved Yosemite Valley in California and helped create the world's first National Park system.

We (Jonathan and Amanda – the Education Team) have been using the award to engage school groups, adult groups and staff with the National Park for the past five years. In 2019 we are offering volunteers the chance to earn a John Muir Award. There are four challenges at the heart of the award and it requires four days of time-commitment over the course of the year.

You will discover, explore, conserve and share your experiences of our wonderful heathlands, taking part in group activities, public events and conservation work as part of our Heathlands Reunited project.

Please register your interest by sending an email to JohnMuirAward@southdowns.gov.uk before the end of January and we will work together to develop and personalise your award at the beginning of next year.

JONATHAN DEAN,
EDUCATION OFFICER



WE NEED YOUR VIEWS!

Whilst volunteering you may sometimes wonder about the big picture. During the first five years of our Partnership Management Plan (PMP) much has been achieved, often with volunteer input, with many projects featured in Downland Thymes. The PMP is for the Park, not just the SDNPA, and is a shared venture between many organisations – for example, the Wildlife Trusts, Forestry Commission, Southern Water, the Arts Council and Tourism SE.

With a new farm scheme, the Glover Review of Protected Landscapes, and the 25 year Environment Plan from Defra, this is the time to look ahead. During 2018 we have been reviewing progress and looking at future challenges. The SDNPA has worked with wider networks to scope out programmes of work which would have the most impact, and these were discussed by the SDNPA and the South Downs Partnership at a September workshop. In November and December, through Parish Workshops, via the website and network meetings, the intention is to firm up these programmes, and there will be a second workshop on **24 January 2019** to draw it all together.

At the same time, the Glover Review has launched its call for evidence, posing a series of questions about the future of our Protected Landscapes. As a volunteer you are warmly invited to contribute to both processes, via the discussion board on the SDNPA intranet. Your views matter!

ANDREW LEE,
SDNPA DIRECTOR OF
COUNTRYSIDE
POLICY AND MANAGEMENT

If you need any help to submit your views please contact Gemma
vrs@southdowns.gov.uk

Wilmington volunteering task
© SDNPA Daniel Greenwood



VOLUNTEER CONSERVATION FUND

DO YOU HAVE A CONSERVATION PROJECT IN MIND THAT YOU'D LOVE SOME HELP TO ACHIEVE?

The South Downs VRS Committee alongside the South Downs Trust will be launching a new **Volunteer Conservation Fund** in January with up to £5,000 available each year to support one or two deserving conservation projects within the National Park.

If you, a friend, a colleague, a volunteer group etc. have an idea – why not apply? The application process is simple – with the best one or two submissions awarded funds by the VRS Committee and Lead Rangers in May next year.

These projects can be almost anything, so long as they aim to enhance our National Park and involve the VRS in some meaningful way.

Applications are formally invited between January and March 2019.

However, if you're very interested right now, further information and the short (one page) application form is available at: www.southdownstrust.org.uk/volunteer-fund.

Good Luck!

MIKE ELLIS, TREASURER, VRS COMMITTEE

Volunteers assist with the South Pond restoration project
© Angela Ward



JOIN THE SOUTH DOWNS NEWSLETTER

Want to know more about what was 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...

www.southdowns.gov.uk/newsletter



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: **Mountain Warehouse, Clusons, JD Sports/Milletts/Blacks/Ultimate Outdoor, Goodrowes, Rohan, Roger Gunn and Southdown Bikes.** 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.





IN SEPTEMBER KIRSTY FERRIS AND CAMERON MACDONALD, TWO OF OUR YOUNGEST VOLUNTEERS, WERE INVITED TO ATTEND THE EUROPARC CONFERENCE IN THE CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK, HERE'S THEIR REPORT...

On the first day of the conference we listened to keynote speakers, Richard Louv, Hendrikus van Hensbergen and Karen Keenleyside. Richard Louv's speech was particularly thought provoking, as he spoke about nature deficit disorder in children and how children do not experience nature the same way as previous generations.

We both felt that the South Downs is a great place to start implementing change and one of the ways to do this could be to implement the Youth Manifesto formed at the conference. The contents of which outlines a need to involve young people in the decision making for National Parks while also educating up and coming youth with projects and education schemes to give them a sense of appreciation for the natural world.

In the afternoon of the first day the group split to take part in workshops. Kirsty

took part in a youth workshop which focused on picking a specific problem in protected areas and finding a solution. Many of the problems discussed focused on poor transport links in rural areas and loneliness of people in rural areas. The resolutions included apps to connect communities and creating community spaces to share skills and meet new people whilst carrying out conservation.

Cameron took part in a workshop that took a close-up look at the links between natural heritage and cultural heritage. Among the participants we had a variety of European nationalities so we all shared stories of how each of our countries had lost a particular agricultural/ horticultural practice and then how we would regain those skills. It was striking to note the similarities between each of our individual regions. This would later prove to be the whole purpose of the workshop; a look at how we could drop country borders and share regional practice instead – a new 'natural world EU' so to speak.

The second day of the conference involved a range of activities in the Cairngorms, ranging from mountain biking, kayaking, climbing and visits to The Highland Wildlife Park and also The Highland Folk Museum which very much resembles The Weald and Downland Open Air Museum in Singleton.

Overall we both found the conference hugely worthwhile at bringing young people's problems and successes in protected and rural areas to the forefront of people's minds. The youth manifesto that was launched at the end of the conference highlights how young people would like these problems resolved to better allow them to continue living in protected areas and to educate people on the environment.

It was great working with the South Downs and the wider European delegates, learning and inspiring each other to protect and conserve the natural world, bringing a new hopeful generation of people into National Parks.

KIRSTY FERRIS AND CAMERON MACDONALD, SDNPA VOLUNTEERS

"In response to the conference I would like to see more partnerships between the South Downs National Park and youth organisations, such as the Scout Association, Girl Guiding and the National Citizen Service. As this would encourage younger volunteers and outdoor education with children as young as five."

Kirsty Ferris

**SOUTH DOWNS
VOLUNTEER
RANGER SERVICE**

**SOUTH DOWNS
NATIONAL PARK**

Downland Thymes: News for the South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service. Issue 82, December 2018. © 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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