

# DOWNLAND THYMES

NEWS FOR THE SOUTH DOWNS VOLUNTEER  
RANGER SERVICE ISSUE 85 | AUTUMN 2019

## THIS IS WHY WE DO IT



### OVER THE LAST FIVE YEARS THE WESTERN AREA VOLUNTEERS HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN THE RE-INTRODUCTION OF WATER VOLE TO THE RIVER MEON.

Starting with the eradication of the non-native American mink population along the river, we progressed through monitoring to ensure that the mink were not returning and then on to the eventual release of the water voles into various sections.

On 17 March 2019 a group of volunteers were involved in stinging nettle suppression on a section of the river bank to encourage the growth of grass and other plants to which water voles are partial. This involved cutting back the new nettle growth and then

raking the mown vegetation and piling it away from the bank. The success of this strategy was apparent (the regime has been carried out thrice annually for the last three years) as we were blessed with lesser celandines and new grass in quite a few areas along the stretch we were mowing.

Water voles had been released from source to sea along 48km of the River Meon but none had been released in the area we were dealing with. During the morning while monitoring the mink raft our Ranger noted that there

were water vole prints and spraint. Elation for Elaina. Then one of the volunteers saw burrow entrances in the bank, the voles had migrated from the release areas into this previously vole free zone. Needless to say we didn't see any voles but there was lots of evidence that they were there which gave us all a lift and made us realise that we can make a difference.

**TERRY DOYLE, WESTERN AREA  
VOLUNTEER RANGER**

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Water vole  
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Water vole  
prints and poo  
©Terry Doyle





## CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

The summer has been an invigorating time for volunteering in the South Downs. Some new initiatives have been launched, including micro-volunteering – where just a few minutes are spent making a difference locally through to young people's volunteering in the South Downs Youth Action programme. Hopefully these initiatives will bring greater understanding to a wider audience about the sort of work we do and just maybe we will see some younger members being recruited to the VRS.

The VRS Committee was very pleased with the response for applications to use our VRS Conservation Fund and has been delighted to offer assistance to five applicants, with some additional funding being very kindly made available by the South Downs National Park Trust. These conservation projects cover all areas of the National Park except the west and many will be offering you, as VRS members, the opportunity to become involved with their delivery. We have also been pleased to agree a Travel Fellowship Fund application for a group of Wealden Heaths volunteers to embark on an expedition to Bardsey Island off the North Wales coast in the autumn to carry out conservation work there. It should provide an excellent opportunity for those volunteers to learn from new experiences and hopefully they will be able to let us know all about it in a future edition of Downland Thymes.

Finally, I hope you have all had the opportunity to pick up a set of tick tweezers if you volunteer on outdoor activities, if not just speak to your Area or project staff to see if you can pick up a set.

RON WILDER, VRS CHAIR



## UPDATE FROM THE VOLUNTEERING TEAM



Waxcaps  
© Daniel Greenwood

Thank you to our 300 volunteers for your ongoing contribution in the South Downs, helping to keep the National Park rich in wildlife, and its cultural heritage cared for. Your time out on the South Downs has recently taken a shift towards improving access, with over 70 volunteers contributing towards the South Downs Way, and the same number providing access improvements elsewhere. The desire to challenge the plastic crisis on our coastlines led to over 80 days undertaking beach cleans. In terms of our burgeoning youth work, our Youth Ambassadors, Cameron and Kirsty, delivered a talk to professional educators, scientists and academics at Brighton University in June. They also helped to deliver our youth volunteering programme in August.

It has surely been met with relief that summer of 2019 was not subject to the heatwave of last year. The South Downs are greener and more pleasant than they were in 2018 and the heat has been nowhere near as dangerous (despite the record temperature for the UK of 38.7 degrees on Thursday 25 July!). The rain that fell early in the summer bodes well for the autumn mushroom-boom that will be hitting the large areas of ancient woodland we have in the National Park soon. With this in mind, I will be leading woodland fungi ID sessions this autumn to help introduce volunteers to the basics of fungi ID and ecology (see page 9).

Your contribution to the conservation of chalk grassland also supports fungi in the array of rare mushrooms known as

waxcaps which pop up at this time of year and depend on the open character of the downland to prosper. Though they can be a bit flat they're hard to miss, coming in bright pinks, yellows and reds. They are incredibly sensitive and research has shown that ploughing up grasslands can all but destroy their populations, with many years required for them to recover. So this autumn keep an eye out for these magical mushrooms popping up in the chalk turf. Fungi also have a key role in the lifecycle of orchids, passing precious nutrients and minerals through the root systems, helping these charismatic plants flourish.

I've not got mushroom left in this article so I would like to take this opportunity to thank Downland Thymes volunteer Russell Cleaver for his part in the editorial team. Russell is stepping back from his role with the Downland Thymes after several years of key involvement in producing articles and encouraging others to provide content, helping staff to steer the direction of the publication to where it is today. Thanks once again, Russell, for your involvement with the Downland Thymes. If another volunteer from the Central, Western or Wealden areas would like to be involved please contact us via [dt@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:dt@southdowns.gov.uk) with an expression of interest.

Thank you again for all the time you offer as volunteers and for being key ambassadors for the South Downs National Park.

DANIEL GREENWOOD,  
SDNPA VOLUNTEER  
DEVELOPMENT OFFICER



## PLANTS OF THE PARK

THIS NEW SECTION OF DOWNLAND THYMES WILL CELEBRATE THE PLANTS FOUND IN THE SOUTH DOWNS. IF YOU'D LIKE TO CONTRIBUTE A PIECE FOR THIS SECTION PLEASE SEND IT THROUGH TO [DT@SOUTHDOWNSGOV.UK](mailto:DT@SOUTHDOWNSGOV.UK).

### THE ROUND-HEADED RAMPION (*PHYTEUMA TENERUM*)

This member of the bellflower family *Campanulaceae* is known as The Pride of Sussex. Previously abundant, this beautiful chalk downland specialist has suffered from loss of habitat caused by ploughing up the Downland, fertilising and lack of suitable grazing.

The globular spiky flowers appearing from mid to late summer on almost leafless stems 10-30cm tall are a striking Oxford blue.

Sadly, although still abundant in mountain meadows in parts of Europe, in Britain it is now confined to the south and south-east from Dorset eastwards.

KATE FRANKLAND, EASTERN AREA  
VOLUNTEER RANGER

## A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Hopefully you've all had a good summer, a bit of a rest and you're raring to go with the autumnal tasks that are no doubt ready and waiting for you.

This time of year is great for foraging with the hedges heavy with blackberries and fungi popping up on woodland floors. If you haven't already, please sign up for the fungi ID course which Daniel is leading – see details on page 9.

It's also a great time of year to explore the heaths of the South Downs as the heather comes into bloom. If you're not familiar with this area of the National Park see the map of heathlands included in the Heathlands Reunited project area on page 11 and details of how you can plan a day out discovering this magical landscape.

As Daniel has already mentioned, Russell Cleaver is stepping down from his role as part of the editorial team for Downland Thymes. It has been lovely to work with Russell on building this publication and we will miss his input greatly. Thank you Russell.

As always please keep sending us your articles, photos, stories and snippets of wisdom for inclusion in future editions of this magazine – simply email [dt@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:dt@southdowns.gov.uk).

If you get any good photos of the changing colours of the trees while out volunteering please share them on social media, or email them through to us office dwellers so we can gaze on the reds and yellows of the autumnal South Downs.

Enjoy!

REBECCA SAUNDERS,  
EDITOR, DOWNLAND THYMES







Job done!  
© Kim Dawson, LDC Ranger



The sheep's wool and hay are applied  
© Kim Dawson, LDC Ranger

# A DES RES FOR REPTILES

ALL OUR REPTILES ARE PROTECTED BY EITHER UK OR EUROPEAN LAWS AND DEVELOPERS MUST AVOID HARM TO THEM OR THEIR HABITATS. WHEN THIS ISN'T ACHIEVABLE IT'S USUALLY POSSIBLE FOR WORK TO PROCEED IF COMPENSATING HABITATS CAN BE FOUND AND THE AFFECTED CREATURES MOVED.

Often the opportunity can be taken to provide an improved habitat and there may be benefits for the wider population.

Eastbourne Borough Council specialists are currently involved in just such a relocation of slow worms and common lizards from a site in Eastbourne town. The recipient site is within the large area of, mainly, grassland and waterways to the east of the town abutting the Langney residential area. This has previously been grazed so lacks a desirable level of

vegetation cover for its new inhabitants but has been fenced to allow a more diverse range of plants to develop.

Additionally a number of hibernacula, winter quarters, have been constructed, one by the Eastern Area Thursday group, an interesting variation on the usual seasonal fencing and grassland management.

The turf was stripped from a 2m x 4m area over which logs were arranged allowing for

numerous nooks and crannies. These were insulated with sheep wool and hay and finally covered in the turves, the result not unlike a miniature prehistoric long barrow.

It will be interesting to revisit the site in a year or two to judge its success.

**RON WELLS, EASTERN AREA VOLUNTEER RANGER**



# A WALK IN THE PARK

THIS SUMMER, I WENT FOR A WALK IN A PARK, BUT NOT IN THE SOUTH DOWNS. MY WIFE AND I VISITED STANLEY PARK IN VANCOUVER. THIS PARK IS A SURVIVING FRAGMENT OF THE TEMPERATE RAINFOREST IN CANADA. AND AT 400 HECTARES IT IS SOME FRAGMENT.

Park undergrowth  
© Russell Cleaver



While around much of the park swirls an inlet of the Pacific Ocean, to the south it abuts downtown Vancouver. Remarkably, the park is still as densely forested today as it was a century or more ago. Although, with two million people living on its doorstep it's amazing that it has survived.

Surrounding and protecting the forest is a 10k sea wall, which creates a cycle and walking trail that links it to the city. Waymarked trails, based on original logging routes, also wind through the lush vegetation, whilst other amenities; such as viewpoints, lakes, restaurants and an aquarium; are hidden amongst the trees. Yet much local wildlife survives amidst the undergrowth. We saw beavers, raccoons and skunks as well as woodpeckers and the ubiquitous American robin in the fortnight we visited.

But it's the trees, many which bear the scars of past fellings, that remain most in the memory. Many stumps of previous giant trees remain on site, bearing the notches made by early lumberjacks. Most conifers don't re-sprout when felled but instead, these stumps can act as nurse-trees: rotting wood creates an ideal niche for tree seeds to germinate and grow. So years later such stumps support another generation of trees.

Consequently, while much of the park was logged before the 1920s, today the forest

has regrown and is now cherished and used by city dwellers as a unique public amenity. Ecologically, in this part of British Columbia, three main species dominate the canopy; Western red cedar, Douglas fir and Eastern hemlock. These trees we know from introduced plantations and parks in the UK. But in their natural home, mature specimens can be enormous, towering above visitors such as I.

What is more, these forest trees once played a central role for the indigenous First Nation tribes that lived amongst them. Many myths were built up about these trees. While there, we went on a "Talking Trees" walk, led by a descendant of a local tribe to hear about the myths and also how the original people depended on the forest for their food, and their livelihood. Nowadays it is clear, from the way this park is marketed, managed and used, that it is much appreciated by modern city dwellers of Vancouver.

Stanley Park is literally a world away from our South Downs woodlands, and while I am very aware of the heritage value of our own ancient trees, it was a revelation to see and hear about the heritage of this particular temperate rainforest in Canada.

**RUSSELL CLEAVER, WESTERN AREA VOLUNTEER RANGER**

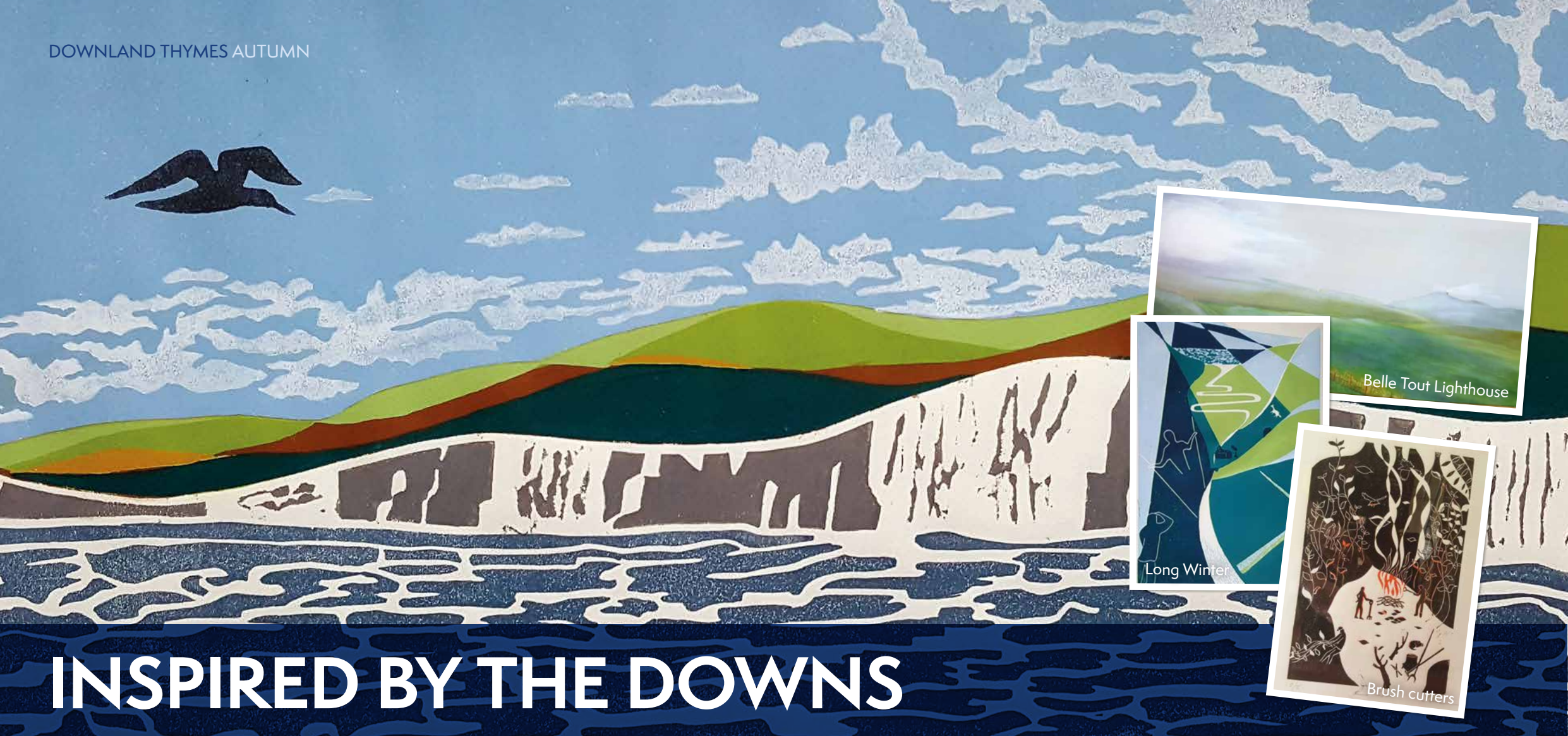


Park nurse tree  
© Russell Cleaver



Park tree talk & walk  
© Russell Cleaver





# INSPIRED BY THE DOWNS

THE SOUTH DOWNS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN IMPORTANT TO ME FOR EXERCISE, SOLITUDE AND TO CONNECT TO NATURE. I WANTED TO GIVE SOMETHING BACK TO THE NATIONAL PARK ON RETIREMENT.

However, by volunteering I soon began to acquire new inspiration and heightened appreciation for the natural world.

At the same time I became interested in expressing myself through art. I had dabbled with artistry, as a hobby throughout my life. Only when I retired did I take to it in earnest.

Volunteering for the National Park and picking art back up as a pastime proved to be a happy coincidence. Some of the new experiences morphed into inspiration for creativity. Art is about self expression as much as technical skill.

Print making makes me think about shape and colour. My first print was inspired by the Seven Sisters. It is a reduction lino cut print. Using a single block the colours are cut and printed one on top of the other.

Sometimes volunteering activity itself inspires creativity. In another work, 'brush cutters,' I've tried to capture the energy and physicality of what is quite a common activity for volunteers.

'Long Winter' was inspired by a cold winter's day working at 'The Long Man of Wilmington', scrub bashing. It was bleak even in the winter sun. I feel connected through bad weather to a base instinct. The printed colours designed to give a sense of the season. There is artistic license in that you can't see the sea and the Long Man without being airborne. The print is about capturing the emotion, not the reality.

I don't always print, I also draw or paint. I start with a vision that I want to capture and then decide which media will work best. I'm moving to acrylics from oil paints, because they are water based and less environmentally damaging. I've painted numerous scenes from the local area.

The wintery sun over Belle Tout, the light house at Beachy Head and an intriguing path across the hills all inspired by emotion, expressing itself in oil paint.

The beaches along the Sussex Coast help define this part of the world. I am often

drawn to the detail of a scene. Recently I was looking at the way the beach groins had been worn by the waves. The character in the worn wood seemed to call to be recorded and so I drew in ink.

Our life experiences frame our world view. And so my continuing life journey, including volunteering influences what I create.

My latest work, in progress, is a commentary on consumerism. Ostensibly an image of a knickerbockerglory, the image is full of concealed dead animals. The principle being that the more we consume the more we destroy. The work is intended to be thought provoking rather than decorative. Volunteering has given me a heightened connectivity with the environment.

I like to think that when someone gives my art a new home, they take a little of my world view with them.

STEVE BROOKMAN,  
EASTERN AREA VOLUNTEER RANGER



Sketch of knickerbockerglory

Above: Seven Sisters

Ink drawing of a rotten wooden beach groin

Orchids are found across the globe. Small and large, they have universal appeal. To celebrate this much loved flower, I wrote this poem while in the Cayman Islands where the banana orchid is the national flower...

## MAGNIFICENT EPIPHYTE DELIGHT

From Arctic Tundra  
To Down Under.  
Except Antarctica.  
Thirty thousand types plus  
Grow across the planet for us.  
On a tree limb, branch or bark  
Preferring light to the dark.  
Symbiotic.  
It takes nothing from its host  
Gives us back the most.  
Independent too,  
On leaf litter, ground or rock  
Can even grow in a old crock.  
It's not awkward.  
It's an Orchid!  
It does no harm,  
Flowers spread its colour and charm.  
From a single cell of the adventitious bud  
To the Red passionate life blood.  
An anchor to absorb the moisture  
Breathing the air in its cloister.  
A Dancing Lad with a Lady's-Slipper  
Even able to bake cake with Vanilla.  
A fragrant white Ghost to attract a Sphinx.  
An 'orkhis' Banana's six feet spike  
With lips of purplish pink.  
What's not to like?  
Flowering colours of every hue.  
For the likes of us to imbue.  
The Dollar's pseudobulbs,  
Storing up its wealth.  
To ensure us and its future health.  
From the rarest spiritual Blue  
Purple, Red, Pink and White  
Respect, passion, adoration  
Pure and true.  
Yellow and Orange  
A friend to hold.  
Should I be so bold!  
Given, grown, bought or sold.  
Amazing Epiphyte.  
Bringing pleasure untold.

ROGER P. READ  
BOTANIC GARDENS AND SPOTTS.  
CAYMAN  
17/03/2019

Above: Banana Orchid  
© Roger Read

Right: Early purple Orchid  
© Nigel Symington





# SATHI'S JOY AFTER DISCOVERING VOLUNTEERING IN THE SOUTH DOWNS

FOR MUCH OF HER LIFE SATHI SIVAPRAGASAM FELT LIKE OPPORTUNITIES WERE LIMITED. BUT NOW THE GRANDMOTHER HAS FOUND A NEW LEASE OF LIFE – AS A VOLUNTEER RANGER FOR THE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK.

Whether it's conservation work, litter picking, fencing, coppicing or laying hedges, Sathi says the South Downs is her 'happy place' and she can't get enough of volunteering.

"I just love being in the South Downs," says Sathi, who lives in Hove. "Being with nature is very good for my mental health and overall well-being. It's very peaceful. Volunteering has given me such a sense of purpose and just makes me feel great about life, so I want other people to know about its benefits!"

Rewinding the clock, the mum-of-two recalls her early life and the struggles she faced. "My life has been quite difficult and, the community where I am from in Sri Lanka, there are limited opportunities for women," explains Sathi. "I was born in between five brothers so they were given all the chances in life."

With a fiercely independent streak, Sathi moved to the UK during the 1970s and went on to raise a family, working in a bank in Northampton for many years. But she says she always felt something was missing and was constantly yearning to be closer to the natural world.

In 2007, she moved from Northampton to be closer to her daughter in Brighton – and it wasn't long before she discovered the amazing landscape on her doorstep.

"The fresh air and the views of the South Downs – I will never forget the first time I experienced it," says Sathi. "I was already interested in walking – that's always been one of my passions – so I've been returning to the Downs nearly every week ever since."

Sathi initially volunteered for the RSPB after seeing an advert and, a couple of years later, heard about the South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service through a project called MOSAIC, which helped people from BAME backgrounds get involved with National Parks in the UK.

After undergoing training that included learning about countryside management and conservation, Sathi has been a Volunteer Ranger for the past five years.

"I just love being outside and being part of a team – I don't care what the job is!" laughs Sathi, whose favourite spot in the National Park is Cuckmere Haven and the stunning Seven Sisters.

"Volunteering has given me a lot of opportunities to experience life and meet new people. I like the camaraderie and I like to connect with nature. There's something very special about it. I'm also really keen for people from minority groups to get involved in volunteering."

"It doesn't have to be a huge commitment, but even things like microvolunteering can have a big impact." Sathi adds that she just wants to keep on enjoying exploring the landscape so close to her home. "I don't think I'll ever stop!" laughs Sathi. "The South Downs has everything – it has the seaside and then the beautiful hills. It's my happy place."



## SATHI'S TWO MICROVOLUNTEERING TASKS:

### THE TWO-MINUTE CLEAN

Beach clean, litter pick or path clean, take part when out and about on a dog walk or on the way to work and help reduce the amount of litter dropped.

For more information visit [beachclean.net](http://beachclean.net) or [walksaroundbritain.co.uk/pathclean](http://walksaroundbritain.co.uk/pathclean)

### RIGHTS OF WAY MONITORING

If you're out walking in West or East Sussex help monitor the rights of way and if you see a bridge with missing deck planks, broken stiles, fallen tree and damaged or missing signs report the issue.

For more information see [westsussex.gov.uk/rightsofwaymonitoring](http://westsussex.gov.uk/rightsofwaymonitoring) or [eastsussex.gov.uk/rightsofwaymonitoring](http://eastsussex.gov.uk/rightsofwaymonitoring)

To report rights of way issues in Hampshire visit [hants.gov.uk/rightsofway](http://hants.gov.uk/rightsofway)



Mushroom cone at Midhurst common  
© Daniel Greenwood

## WOODLAND FUNGI ID DAY COURSE

### WHEN AND WHERE:

**Thursday 10 October, 10am – 4pm**  
at Buriton Village Hall, High Street,  
Buriton, Petersfield, GU31 5RX

OR

**Saturday 9 November, 10am – 4pm**  
at Stanmer Park meeting room, Lewes  
Road, Brighton, BN1 9SE

**Cost:** £5 – you will be given details of how to pay this to secure your place.

**Refreshments:** Tea, coffee and biscuits will be provided – please bring your own lunch.

### BOOK NOW!

Please email Helena Lewis at [vrs.veofficer@gmail.com](mailto:vrs.veofficer@gmail.com) to book your place.

IN AUTUMN 2019 WE ARE OFFERING TWO DAY COURSES – ONE IN THE EAST AND ONE IN THE WEST – WHERE VOLUNTEER DEVELOPMENT OFFICER DANIEL GREENWOOD WILL TEACH YOU ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT WOODLAND FUNGI IDENTIFICATION...

Fungi are one of the three kingdoms of life and act as a crucial part of life on earth. We are dependent on fungi for some of the best things in life – cheese, beer, washing detergent and medicines like insulin. On this training course you can learn how to identify common species of woodland fungi, their place in woodland ecology and how they have helped us as a species over millions of years. This course is not culinary focused or foraging-based but there will be simple guidance on edibility in a safety context. After lunch there will be a guided walk looking for woodland fungi.



### Bonnet mushrooms

A family of mushrooms that are commonly found in the autumn on fallen wood. Often growing from behind bark and between the fibres in well-decayed fallen timber.

Image © Daniel Greenwood



### Fly agaric

The most iconic mushroom around. Fly agaric is part of the Amanita family which contains many toxic species. Most common in relation to birch trees, growing in connection with the roots. Also common on heathlands. Poisonous.

Image © Daniel Greenwood



### Sulphur tuft

A very common mushroom that grows in crowds in deadwood but also from submerged deadwood in soil. Can be found in woods, parks, gardens and the urban environment. Poisonous.

Image © Daniel Greenwood





## VOLUNTEER LEADER TRAINING

ON TUESDAY 23 JULY VOLUNTEERS FROM THE EASTERN AREA, ALONG WITH YOUTH AMBASSADOR KIRSTY FERRIS, TOOK PART IN OUR FIRST IN-HOUSE VOLUNTEER LEADER TRAINING SESSION.

It was a very hot day at the Seven Sisters but thankfully the shade of Turkey Barn kept us cool enough. It's a site where you can easily be distracted by the tourists accidentally entering the room looking for the toilets or the hustle and bustle of the next door café.

The biggest distraction, ironically, was a strimmer being operated outside the window which was technically within the safe operating distance of 15 metres. It helped to underline the difficult balance of using hazardous equipment required to maintain habitats and access in public places. Issues discussed during the day included keeping safe distances in place during volunteering activities.

In previous years we have brought in an external provider to deliver leader training for volunteers. However, we felt there was a need to design a training session that fitted our requirements more closely and that was more informal. It is also difficult to find training providers who have the flexibility we require in

terms of location. The 100 mile length of the National Park does provide challenges in securing consistent training providers for volunteers.

Volunteers attending had been identified by the area team as suitable leaders, largely to avoid cancellation of volunteer days and to maintain capacity. This is particularly vital in the Seven Sisters area where groups are led by volunteer leaders in partnership with organisations like Sussex Wildlife Trust and East Sussex County Council. Therefore involving new volunteer leaders is a priority in the Eastern area.

Youth ambassador Kirsty Ferris was attending to build her skillset towards a career in nature conservation:

"As somebody who wishes to work in the conservation sector, where working with volunteers is integral, being able to gain experience in leading while still studying will help me stand out to future employers."

Kirsty has led student volunteer groups at university but she was concerned that this did not provide a realistic picture of people she would be working alongside in future. As part of the 4 per cent of South Downs volunteers aged 16–25, Kirsty is also well aware of the capacity issue:

"Having volunteer task leaders is important for the VRS as it helps reduce the number of tasks being cancelled due to suitable leaders not being available."

We wish the new volunteers in the Eastern area well in their new roles and look forward to supporting them going forward. Thanks to everyone who took part and made it such an informative experience for all involved – especially for Max and I.

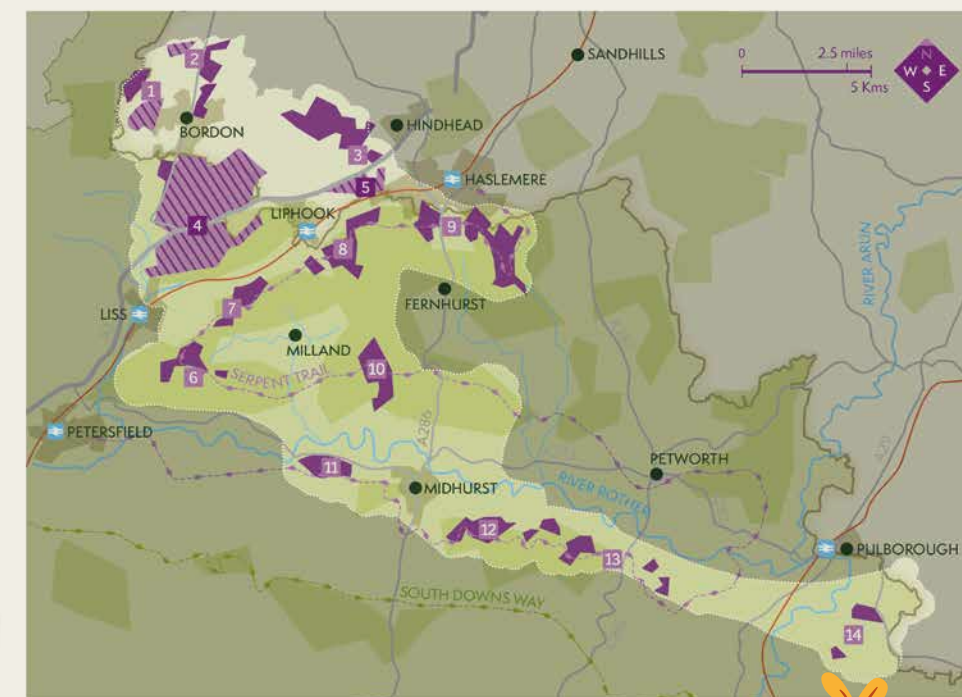
**DANIEL GREENWOOD,**  
VOLUNTEER DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

## DISCOVER THE HEATHS OF THE SOUTH DOWNS



The chalk escarpments define the east of the South Downs National Park, but as you move west, the landscape changes. Open hills give way to a fascinating network of ancient hedge-lined lanes, dense tracts of woodland, and purple heaths. Stretching between Petersfield and Storrington these heaths are among the rarest of all the habitats in the Downs, covering just 1 per cent.

The South Downs heaths are great to visit at any time of year but when the purple heather blooms in September they become even more magical. These are now even easier to find thanks to an online interactive map – visit [southdowns.gov.uk/find-your-local-heath](http://southdowns.gov.uk/find-your-local-heath).



### Our heathlands

- 1 Slab and Warren (MOD), Shortheath Common
- 2 Kingsley Common (MOD), Broxhead Common
- 3 Ludshott Common, Passfield Common, Bramshott Chase
- 4 Woolmer Forest and Longmoor enclosure (MOD)
- 5 Bramshott Common (MOD)
- 6 Duford Heath, Combe Hill, Hambledon Piece, Tullecombe
- 7 Coldharbour Wood, Chapel Common
- 8 Shufflesheeps, Iron Hill, Stanley and Lynchmere Common
- 9 Marley Common, Black Down
- 10 Woolbeding
- 11 Iping, Stedham and Trotton Common
- 12 Ambersham and Heyshott Common
- 13 Grafton Common, Lavington Common/Plantation, New Piece, Welches and Warren
- 14 Wiggonholt Common and Rackham Plantation

### Key

- Heathland area
- Heathland area – Ministry of Defence Land (MOD) Restricted Access
- Project boundary
- South Downs National Park boundary
- Road
- Railway
- Station
- Settlement



## PIC IN THE PARK

Racton Tower is a ruined folly rising above the trees on a hill in the Downs in West Sussex, remote from any building. Built between 1756–65 it has been abandoned for over a century. The gaping holes, like mouths, in its side gives the structure a foreboding appearance. This is no doubt why it has long been associated with haunting and ghostly stories.

To visit it, you follow a bridleway from a junction on the B2146, some 2km west of Funtingdon. But take care, don't let it frighten the horses...



## SAY HI TO OUR DOG AMBASSADORS

Be sure to look out for our dog ambassadors while out and about on the heaths – you'll be able to spot them by their branded gilets. They would love to have a chat about dog walking and are happy to answer any questions you might have. Do you already walk on these heathland sites? Would you be interested in becoming an ambassador? Email [heathlands@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:heathlands@southdowns.gov.uk) to find out more.



# YOUR REVIEWS

This section is all about sharing reviews of your favourite things. Tell us about books you've read, pubs you've visited, tools or gadgets you've used or even websites that you'd recommend to other volunteers. Email your reviews, of up to 100 words, to [dt@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:dt@southdowns.gov.uk) with a picture.

## THE RAM INN AT FIRLE

The Ram Inn is a delightful country pub situated in the centre of the village of Firle. It welcomes walkers and has a fine selection of real ales.

The rambling old brick and flint building has three main rooms, each with its own open fire lit every day between October and April. The large flint-walled garden at the rear is perfect for a peaceful summer supping of your favourite tippie under the trees.

With easy access to over 100 miles of walking and cycling along the South Downs Way, it is a perfect stop off point. For the less adventurous, there are circular walks to suit everyone from the pub.

The restaurant is well recommended with many ingredients being sourced locally and the village itself is charming and picturesque with its own village shop and school. It has no through road; only walkers can head south towards the Downs.

For those wanting to take time to explore the area there are also five beautiful bedrooms and the offer of bed & breakfast all year round.



Volunteers, if you know of a pub that deserves this award, please let us know. We're talking about good old-fashioned public houses, rather than gastro pubs or themed inns. We want to know about places where you don't need to take your boots off before crossing the threshold! Send us a photo and 100 words explaining why the pub you nominate should be recognised.

## BOOK REVIEW

### 'WOODLAND CRAFT'

by Ben Law

Publisher: Guild of Master Craftsmen Publications Ltd., Lewes.  
Published 2015, £25

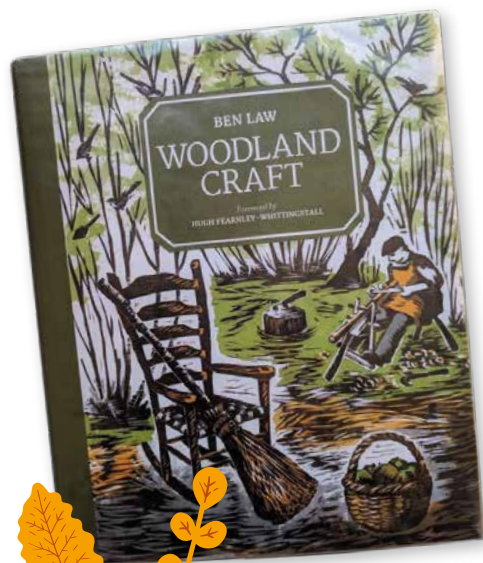
Ben Law is well known for building his own home in a West Sussex wood; which became the most popular edition of TV's 'Grand Designs'.

This book is not new, I got it out of a library, but is well worth reading for anyone interested in woods, trees and countryside crafts. He writes on a wide variety of topics: from woods as a resource for building

materials, to all sorts of craft making, e.g. spoons to chairs. And he doesn't overlook the most common use of wood, namely, logs for fuel; felling, splitting and seasoning etc.

The illustrations are a real asset, whether as photographs or as pen and ink drawings. They make the book a pleasure to peruse. For me, I want his bentwood sun-lounger, there's no way I could ever make something as beautiful as that. I think I'd better stay with splitting logs for the wood burner.

RUSSELL CLEAVER, WESTERN DOWNS  
VOLUNTEER RANGER



# CAPTION COMPETITION

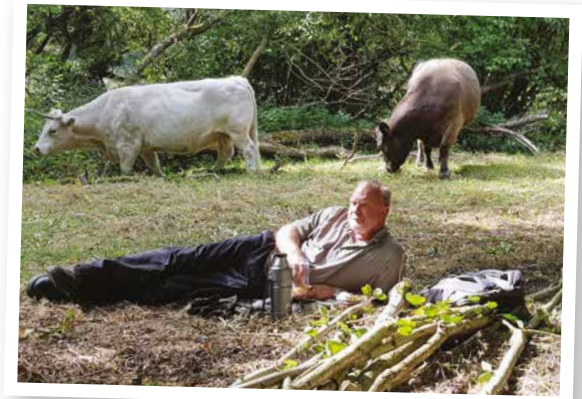
CAN YOU CREATE A WITTY CAPTION FOR THIS PHOTO? EMAIL YOUR IDEAS TO [DT@SOUTHDOWNSGOV.UK](mailto:DT@SOUTHDOWNSGOV.UK)



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

"THAT DESERVES A PAT ON THE HEAD."

TIM SQUIRE, EASTERN AREA RANGER



## DID YOU KNOW?

### HOLLOW WAYS

Hollow ways, or sunken lanes, are characteristic features in the National Park, usually found in sandstone areas in the Sussex Weald and in East Hampshire. The soft nature of the substrate lends itself more easily to erosion, whether by rain or traffic. The English name Holloway (hollow-way) derives from the Old English "hola weg", a sunken road.

While many sunken lanes are now metalled, some are still unsurfaced green lanes, typically now designated as either bridleways or byways. They can indeed be remnants of ancient lanes but are not always so.

Note that boundary trees along their banks can be as impressive as the lanes themselves. They frequently can be interlinked by long, contorted root systems that have often been undercut and eroded, as well as the track bottom.

The southern end of North Stroud Lane, with multiple beech trees on its banks, is an impressive sunken lane in East Hampshire. Whilst Halnaker Lane is a fine example of a hollow lane in Sussex.



Hollow lane,  
N Stroud Lane  
© Russell Cleaver



# SOUTH DOWNS LOCAL PLAN

LANDSCAPE AND THE NEEDS OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES ARE CENTRAL TO THE NEW SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK LOCAL PLAN WHICH WAS ADOPTED BY MEMBERS IN JULY THIS YEAR.

The Plan covers the entire National Park for the next 14 years and rather than being “target driven”, the policies in the Plan are based on the nationally-designated landscape. The Plan sets out measures to mitigate climate change including that any major new developments should seek to be carbon neutral, have better drainage schemes to reduce flood risk and limit water consumption for new developments.

The Local Plan includes over 50 Neighbourhood Plans developed by South Downs’ communities which provide local development management policies and allocate land for development. The exciting plan also sets out the high standards that all proposed development must meet to protect nature and the vital ‘ecosystem’ services it gives us such as clean water, food and space to breathe.

The Plan replaces more than 1,000 overlapping policies that were in existence across the area of the National Park with 92 clear policies covering all aspects of planning.

It follows extensive public consultation with local communities and detailed scrutiny and examination by the Government’s Planning Inspectorate, which found the policies to be sound subject to a number of modifications.

The Local Plan has been informed by a range of factors, including the geography and geology, biodiversity and heritage sites of the National Park, Neighbourhood Plans, local economic needs and the impact of climate change.

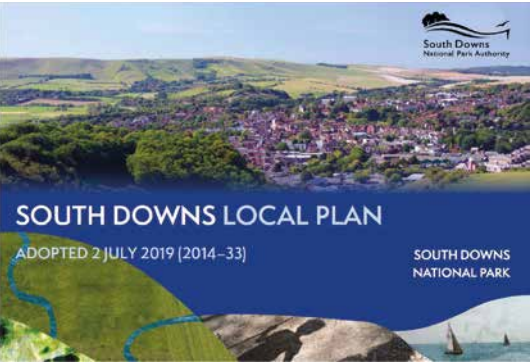
To see the full Local Plan, visit [southdowns.gov.uk/SDLocalPlan](http://southdowns.gov.uk/SDLocalPlan)

## JOIN THE SOUTH DOWNS MONTHLY eNEWSLETTER

WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT WHAT’S 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/newsletter](http://southdowns.gov.uk/newsletter)



## KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF THE LOCAL PLAN INCLUDE:

- Protection for the services provided by the environment such as clean water and air, dark night skies and tranquility.
- As evidenced by feedback from local communities, growth is dispersed across the towns and villages of the National Park, rather than just allowing growth around the largest settlements such as Lewes and Petersfield.
- This is provision of 250 dwellings per year across the National Park.
- High goals for affordable housing – the bar is set at 50 per cent on sites of 11 or more new homes will have to be affordable.
- Conservation of internationally-important landscapes such as Woolmer Forest and the Sussex Heritage Coast, for example.
- Provision of 10.3ha of employment land to create jobs and support the rural economy.
- Conservation and enhancement of “green corridors” to link up habitats and support wildlife, as well as promoting the planting of new trees and hedges.
- Adoption of strategic sites that represent one-off opportunities for developments of exceptional quality – Shoreham Cement Works and North Street Quarter, Lewes.

# BEE LINES

AS YOU KNOW THE ICONIC SOUTH DOWNS CHALK GRASSLAND WITH ITS STUNNING ARRAY OF WILDFLOWERS ATTRACTS A MULTITUDE OF BEES AND BUTTERFLIES.

However these key pollinating species are on the decline and in need of our support. A new campaign called Bee Lines has been launched to help reverse the decline of bees in the South East and create a haven for pollinators in the South Downs National Park. The South Downs National Park Trust is bidding to raise £75,000 to help restore flower-rich habitats that will protect bees and other important pollinators and allow them to thrive.

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

As volunteers your practical tasks are vital to helping the bees and butterflies of the South Downs but if you want to do more read on...

To help the bees and butterflies in the South Downs you can donate to the Bee Lines campaign by visiting [southdownstrust.org.uk](http://southdownstrust.org.uk).

You can also do your bit in your garden or local community such as planting the right type of wildflowers to support pollinators in your area. The following are a few plants to consider:



© Walter Siegmund

### PHACELIA

This quick growing, hardy plant not only attracts a multitude of insects, but also helps suppress weeds and prevents nitrogen leaching!



© Dean Morley

### BIRDSFOOT TREFOIL

Also known as ‘eggs and bacon’ because of the yellow and orange hue of its flowers, this plant usually flowers between May and September.



© Peter Stevens

### OXEYE DAISY

This typical grassland plant blooms between July and September. With its large round daisy heads which appear to ‘glow’ in the evening it has been nicknamed the ‘Moon Daisy’.



© Peter O'Connor

### KNAPWEED

This wild flower is one of the toughest meadow plants and a great source of good quality nectar for pollinators. Flowers June to September.

## 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:

Cotswold Outdoor, Snow & Rock, Gatleys, Runners Need, Clusons, JDSports/Milletts/Blacks/Ulimate Outdoor, Goodrowes, Rohan, Roger Gunn and Southdown Bikes. Also Fitzcane’s café in Midhurst.

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 of each discount.

If you don’t have an ID card, or have lost, damaged or mislaid it then please email [vrs@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto: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.



# CODE OF PRACTICE FOR VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers enhancing chalk  
grassland on Wilmington Hill

© Daniel Greenwood/SDNPA

THIS IS THE LAST DOWNLAND THYMES I WILL BE PERSONALLY HELPING TO EDIT, SO I THOUGHT I'D PASS ON A NUMBER OF POINTS, OR BASIC LAWS FOR VOLUNTEERING, WHICH I HAVE LEARNT FROM EXPERIENCE IN THE FIELD.

These are printed below to give new volunteers an insight into how to behave on task. The first law of volunteering is:

- 1 Never get separated from your lunch.
- 2 On as many tasks as possible – let there be cake!
- 3 Always end a task with the same number of tools, and volunteers, you started with.

#### Vehicular rules

- 4 Don't test how far you can proceed down a muddy slope before parking.
- 5 Avoid driving over hand tools laid in the grass.
- 6 To avoid inconveniencing passengers, drive slowly over 'sleeping policemen' (and when passing live ones).

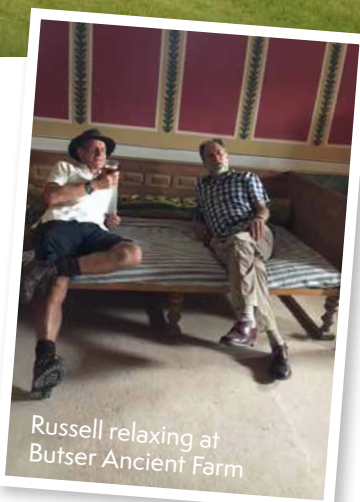
- 7 Hand signals are no longer appreciated – especially those using one or two fingers.

#### Health & Safety update

- 8 Lone Working is discouraged. Supervision is required in case you forget what you are doing, where you are and why? (This is often referred to as the "Private Godfrey" rule). So always know where the nearest toilet/tree is located.

I'm sure others will know of similar essential rules for volunteering. Please send in your own suggested hard-learned lessons for the next issue of this magazine. Happy volunteering!

**RUSSELL CLEAVER, WESTERN AREA  
VOLUNTEER RANGER**



Russell relaxing at  
Butser Ancient Farm



Helping out with the  
water vole monitoring

**SOUTH DOWNS  
VOLUNTEER  
RANGER SERVICE**

**SOUTH DOWNS  
NATIONAL PARK**

Downland Thymes: News for the  
South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service.  
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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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