



SOUTH DOWNS NEWS

WORK AND PLAY IN YOUR NATIONAL PARK

This month:

- **The power of creativity** Find out how a new arts project is connecting our beautiful landscape with mental health and well-being benefits.
- **Lest we forget** Learn more about the poignant wartime stories from across the South Downs as the nation marks Remembrance and the 75th anniversary of D-Day.
- **Be inspired** Read the moving tale of a father and son who embarked on an epic adventure along the South Downs Way – all the way from Nebraska!
- **Win a fabulous Christmas gift** Join our free festive Advent Calendar quiz!

As always please send your comments and ideas to us at newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk

Beauty of National Park inspires colourful exhibition

“The National Park is paradise”

Those were the poignant words from people who have taken part in a new arts project that aims to boost mental health by immersing yourself in the South Downs landscape.

The budding artists’ array of colourful artwork and sculptures were displayed at Merchistoun Hall, in Horndean, Hampshire.

It came after the South Downs National Park Authority teamed up with the charity Artscape to connect people, who would not ordinarily access the National Park, to the stunning landscape on their doorstep.

Artscape, which works across Hampshire, helps improve the lives of anyone who faces isolation through poor health or circumstance by using the creative power of art.

The project recruited participants from Horndean, Waterlooville, Havant and Petersfield and the groups



made three visits to the top of Butser Hill to get inspiration for their pieces.

Alison Jackson spent 97 hours creating her intricate fabric masterpiece, inspired by a photograph she took of hang gliders while at the top of Butser Hill.

“I used 37 different types of fabric to make the picture,” said Alison, who lives in Havant.

“I’ve absolutely loved this experience. Going up there and being able to be in the National Park – it’s so calm and relaxing.

“I hadn’t been up there since I was a child, even though I’m local. I’ve now been up to the South Downs half a dozen times since.”

Best autumn walks



The South Downs is a beautiful place to explore at any time of the year, but there's something really special about enjoying a walk in the countryside in the autumn, with misty mornings and the crunch of frosted fallen leaves under your feet.

We've put together a list of some of our favourite walks to enjoy on these cold, crisp days. Just click on the location to download the walk leaflet!

- **Arundel** - With its fairytale castle and abundance of cafes and traditional pubs, Arundel is the perfect location for an Autumn day out. Choose from a gentle river walk along the banks of the River Arun to more challenging hikes up to Arundel Park and South Stoke
- **Ditchling Beacon and Devil's Dyke** - Explore the highest point in East Sussex, Ditchling Beacon, with its stunning views over the Weald and out to sea, or Devil's Dyke, the longest, deepest and widest 'dry valley' in the whole of the UK
- **Rogate and Harting** - Explore patchwork fields, peaceful villages and the scenic River Rother. Detailing two routes, one starting in Rogate and one in South Harting, this walk takes you through some of the stunning quintessentially English countryside of the Weald.
- **Cheriton** - This is a 10 mile walk, so it's perfect if you want to make a real day of it. Cheriton has a claim to be Hampshire's prettiest village. The highest part of the trail goes along the South Downs Way, where there are excellent views and you may be able to spot red kites flying below.
- **The Meon Valley Trail** - Discover a trail that leads you through English history. Once a railway line running from Fareham to Alton transporting local livestock and agricultural produce, the trail now spans 11 miles. There are no stiles along the way and as the gradient is mostly flat with a wide path, it is suitable for pushchairs and mobility scooters

Alison also made two birds, a linnet and wheatear, out of felt.

She smiled: "I called my birds 'Birds in Paradise' because I really think Butser Hill is paradise."

Another participant, who used sequins and cotton wool to create her piece "Reality Becomes Fantasy", added: "The National Park is so needed. It makes people breathe for a minute and appreciate the beauty of the natural world."



Alison Jackson with her textile creation inspired by Butser Hill

Artscape artist Mandie Molyneux said: "The charity is about helping people who are socially isolated because of health circumstance which can affect anyone at any time in their life.

"These kind of projects are great at raising self-esteem and confidence.

"Art can help mental health because of what I call 'forgetfulness of self'. It's about coming along and getting really involved in a piece of work. Over time, it gives you respite from any issues you might be dealing with."

Andrew Lee, Director of Countryside Policy at the South Downs National Park Authority and who opened the exhibition, said: "The artwork is really wonderful and all the artists should be very proud of their work. I like how each artist has come back with something completely different, demonstrating how everyone will have a different interpretation of the landscape.

"This pilot project with Artscape has been a great success and we're keen to look at further opportunities to promote the mental health benefits of the National Park."



Giving nature a helping hand



It was recently World Animal Day and this month we wanted to shine the spotlight on five biodiversity projects in the National Park.

Our rare chalk grassland, ancient woodland and heathland habitats support an incredible range of mammals, birds, fish, invertebrate and plant species.

Some are among the rarest animals in Britain – and that’s why it’s so important we all strive to protect these awe-inspiring species, the result of millions of years of evolutionary fine-tuning. Because, without our collective efforts to give nature the space and protection to flourish, these “natural works of art” could be lost forever.

Jeremy Burgess, who leads on biodiversity for the National Park, said: “We are working really hard to turn the tide on biodiversity loss on a big and small scale, through larger landscape projects and smaller initiatives for individual species such as the Field Cricket.”

We look at five of the rarest animal species in the South Downs – and what we’re doing to give them a brighter future.

The Field Cricket

The South Downs remains the last bastion in the UK for the iconic Field Cricket, whose “cheep, cheep, cheep” is the quintessential sound of summer.



Thirty years ago the species was isolated to just one site of 100 field crickets in West Sussex. But a concerted effort, led by volunteers and conservation organisations, has helped to establish six colonies at heathland sites in Sussex, Surrey and Hampshire.

A favourite of South Downs National Park Ranger Charles Winchester, he says: “Hearing a field full of

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

them singing at Lord’s Piece on a warm day in May is a pretty special experience.”

Smooth snakes

The rare smooth snake can only be found at a few sandy heathland sites in southern England. The reptile looks a bit like an adder, but lacks the distinctive zig-zag pattern along its back.

The National Park Authority’s Heathlands Reunited Project is working with 10 other partners to restore and protect our heathlands and ensure this species and others have a brighter future.



Wart-biter Bush Cricket

The wart-biter cricket is one of the UK’s most endangered insects and gets its name from the ancient Swedish medical practice of using them to eat skin warts.



A pioneering project has seen the rare insect reintroduced into new chalk grassland habitat around the Deep Dean Water Treatment Works in

East Sussex, thanks to a collaboration between South East Water, Natural England, Buglife, the Zoological Society of London and the SDNPA.

Water Voles

An honourable mention has to be given to the Water Vole – a species you may be lucky enough to spot on the River Meon in Hampshire.

Although it is not necessarily “rare” or endangered, the Water Vole is the fastest declining mammal in the UK. However, the water vole has made a



remarkable comeback in the South Downs National Park thanks to the work of the Meon Valley Partnership, of which the SDNPA is a partner. Over six

years, a total of 2,833 water voles have been released to 30 locations along the stretch of the river.

Duke of Burgundy butterfly



The nationally declining and threatened Duke of Burgundy butterfly responded spectacularly to habitat management work performed as part of the South Downs Way Ahead Nature Improvement Area

(NIA), recovering from the brink of extinction and extending its territory.

In the 'Chantry to Chanctonbury' area of the NIA, annual counts rose from 82 to 408 between 2012 and 2014, an increase of 398 per cent.

Further west, at Heyshott Escarpment near Midhurst, peak daily counts rose from 31 in 2012 to 104 in 2014, an increase of 235 per cent.

What can you do?

- ✓ Help stop the decline of flower meadows so vital for our pollinators by supporting our **Bee Lines project** and create a space for nature in your garden or window sill
- ✓ Use less water
- ✓ Stop using plastic
- ✓ Volunteer for a litter pick or beach clean
- ✓ Help monitor our wildlife during the **Big Butterfly Count**, **Big Garden Bird Watch**, and **Wild Flower Hunt**
- ✓ Take part in **30 Days Wild** run by the Wildlife Trusts



Join our fun Advent Calendar quiz for chance to win an amazing prize!



How good is your general knowledge of the South Downs?

We're proud to be launching our Christmas Advent Calendar Quiz on December 1 – and have a fantastic prize on offer!

Each day you'll be able to open a door to the Advent Calendar to reveal a fun question about the South Downs, with a multiple choice answer.

After all 24 doors are opened, the participant with the most correct answers will be declared the winner (in the event of a tie, the winner will be picked at random). Participants must be over 18 years of age.

The prize will be:

- A magnum of finest English sparkling Nyetimber wine.
- A Ranger Experience for two people in 2020 to go on a day's whistlestop tour of the National Park to experience a "day in the life of a South Downs ranger". Step aboard a Land Rover and see some of the most iconic spots in the National Park and learn about some of its amazing wildlife!

Laura Warren, Events and Engagement Officer for the South Downs National Park, said: "Christmas is on its way and we wanted to have a bit of fun to get people into the seasonal spirit.

"Our Advent Calendar quiz is very easy to take part in and there'll be some amazing pictures to see as well.

"Do make sure you sign up by December 1, so you can open all 24 windows. Good luck to everyone!"

To sign up to the advent calendar quiz go to <http://bit.ly/2NnXBPI>

Riding high as community celebrates new bus stops



A beautifully-crafted timber shelter is the centrepiece of a revitalised bus service serving villages around Petersfield and Midhurst.

Residents gathered to celebrate the unveiling of Rogate's unique bus shelter – designed and built by woodsman Ben Law, who was made famous by his intricate “house in the woods” on Channel 4's Grand Designs.

The rundown bus shelter in the centre of Rogate has now been replaced with the attractive timber shelter, partly funded by the South Downs National Park Authority and sourced from local wood.

Rogate Parish Council also replaced three other shelters in the village through the West Sussex Volunteers Scheme, which saw local volunteers building the structures.

Meanwhile, Stagecoach, which took over the running of the Service 54 and Service 91/92/93 in April 2018, has revamped all bus stops along the routes with colourful South Downs-inspired branding. Since taking over the routes passenger numbers have steadily increased.

At the unveiling of the new shelter, Mary Collins, who has lived in Rogate for 55 years, said: “It's a really lovely bus shelter, especially now winter is on the way.”

Max Harwood, from Rogate Parish Council, said: “It's great that it's built from wood in the local area so fits in with the whole ethos of the South Downs.”



Major funding boost to help protect chalk habitat



A partnership of 10 organisations has received initial National Lottery support for a major new project that will help protect the fragile chalk grassland landscape of the South Downs.

Funding of £138,300 has been awarded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund to help the Changing Chalk partnership progress their plans to apply for a full National Lottery grant of over £2.2m in 2021.

Changing Chalk is focused on the chalk grassland landscape of the Sussex Downs and the communities of the coastal urban fringe of Brighton and Hove, Eastbourne and Lewes. This distinctive landscape has 746,000 people living within the perimeter – one of the most densely populated coastal areas in Northern Europe bordering a fragile habitat.

The majority of the 392sq/km2 project area falls within the South Downs National Park and the Authority is a key partner in the project.

Commenting on the award, Jane Cecil, General Manager for the National Trust's South Downs Portfolio said: “We're delighted to have received this support thanks to National Lottery players. The challenges facing beautiful natural and historic places can only be addressed by working together. Working at landscape scale, with a wide range of partners and communities, is our best chance to better understand this ever-changing landscape and find solutions to conserve heritage for future generations.

“Beautiful natural and historic places matter. Our role is to care for them and ensure they look and feel amazing forever, so that they provide the most benefit to the most people.”

The internationally significant chalk grassland is facing rapid decline with only 4% of original habitat remaining. The vision is to reverse the decline in chalk grassland and establish a long-term collaborative management plan to help protect the habitat and its biodiversity for future generations.

A meeting of minds to help our heathlands



Katy Sherman, Engagement officer for the National Park's Heathlands Reunited project, gives an update on a conference of partners that explored how to better protect these popular reptile-rich habitats.



The Heathland Forum 2019 took place at the Ministry of Defence's Longmoor Camp and focused on the topic of conservation grazing on lowland heaths.

The Heathland Forum provides a platform to share knowledge and best practice to help conserve this threatened and fragmented habitat. We all share the same vision:

'Bigger, better, joined-up heathland that people know about, care about, and use responsibly and sustainably.'

In total, 120 heathland managers and experts joined us from across the South East of England for a packed agenda.

Over the course of the day we learnt that conservation grazing undoubtedly increases species diversity – although timing is critical to this.

We heard that the diversity of grazing animals is an important tool and we should consider rare breeds. And we were reminded that grazing is not the only answer.

Replicating historical management is also a vital tool where appropriate, such as bracken harvesting, turf stripping, heather baling, and gorse.

We asked ourselves, how do we judge success for people and for nature in conservation grazing? One size doesn't fit all, a multi-pronged approach is critical, land managers should celebrate the uniqueness of their individual sites and champion diversity.

Agro-ecological farming can also be highly beneficial. One of the important takeaway messages included the importance of planning ahead, good animal husbandry and the importance of integrated management plans.

Families enjoy Halloween-themed day out at heaths



Ranger Kate Dziubinska recently took part in the National Park's Deadly Heathlands event and gives her account of the action-packed day.



On a frosty, windless morning as we set up for the day's event, an eerie screech could be heard at Chapel Common. Could it be ghouls and ghosts preparing for hallow's eve? Could it be witches flying overhead on broomsticks? No...t'was was the squeaky brakes of the portaloos van delivering our toilet for the day!

Wealden Heaths team ran a Heathlands Reunited 'deadly heathlands' event at Chapel Common, in West Sussex, to showcase the weird and wonderful species to be found there, as well as educating about the common's amazing cultural history.

There was broomstick making, spooky face painting and a treasure trail around the heath, as well as an Iron Age clan re-enacting their everyday activities and the Volunteer Ranger Service demonstrating modern heathland management with a good ol' scrub bash. The day went fantastically with a steady flow of families and dog walkers joining in with the activities throughout the day.

Thirty six brooms were made, 27 Iron Age bracelets were finger-woven and 35 faces painted. Our spread of Halloween themed sandwiches, fruit and sweet treats were gobbled up and the VRS even got eyeball cupcakes for tea-break. We definitely hit lucky with the weather and our treasure trail kept all warm and happy, but the showstopper had to be the rangers' fantastic species models that captivated everyone's imaginations.

All in all it was a successful heathland event and one that we hope to repeat next year. Thank you to everyone for coming!



Lest we forget – the compelling wartime story of the South Downs



Poppies at Sompting by Jamie Fielding

The iconic poppies of Flanders Fields are a testament to loss and recovery – a reminder that landscape recovers after unyielding onslaught, but also acts as a focus for remembrance and a reminder of loss.

Likewise, the landscape of the South Downs has witnessed the impact of World Wars, from historic buildings converted into hospitals for injured troops, to landscapes used to test munitions or train men for the Front.

And, as the nation comes together to commemorate 75 years since D-Day, the South Downs' own footnote in the history of Operation Neptune must not be forgotten.

Here Anooshka Rawden, who leads on Cultural Heritage for the National Park, delves into some of the compelling history of wartime South Downs.

Preparing for D-Day

The South Downs played a key role in D-Day as a training area holding the thousands of men about to be sent to Europe. In May 1944, Field Marshal Montgomery, addressed the Royal Ulster 2nd Battalion Rifles, based at Grenville Hall, outside the village of Droxford in Hampshire. "Monty" stood on his jeep's bonnet to talk to the troops who clustered around their hero. Droxford then hosted a secret meeting of the War Cabinet in June 1944 where Churchill and others met on the Royal train to agree to delay D-day by one day.

"The Day Sussex Died"

Claude Lowther, resident of Herstmonceux Castle, undertook an intensive recruitment drive in Sussex,

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

raising three Battalions of the Royal Sussex Regiment (the 11th, 12th and 13th Battalions).

Known as 'Lowther's Lambs', these men from the South Downs joined up together with friends and family, with Lowther also getting influential friends to support his recruitment drive.

The approach was one that mixed propaganda with a direct approach – with recruiters driving house to house with a doctor to sign men up. Many of these men never saw the South Downs again. The 12th and 13th Battalions, supported by the 11th, were part of a diversionary raid to divert German attention from the main Somme battle site to a location further south. In less than five hours, the 13th Battalion were all but wiped out, and 30 June 1916 became known as "The Day Sussex Died".

Training and testing munitions

The funfair and cable cars of the Victorian age were dismantled at Devil's Dyke and the site became a munitions research ground during the First World War.

The deep chasm of the valley was used to suspend bombs for controlled drops to ensure activation prior to impact. Luckily, work to prepare the site for testing wasn't completed until shortly before the end of the war in 1918, so it was saved from the worst of the plans to use it as a testing site.

In the early 1940s, the site was again commandeered by the government for military training. The Canadian Army took over the Devil's Dyke hotel, and used the site to undertake training in preparation for the D-Day landings.

As a writer from the period says: "Barbed wire entanglements replaced fences, roads were closed and Howitzer guns were parked in lay-bys to keep locals as well as the enemy out."

A meeting of east and west

When Sikh or Hindu soldiers died at one of the Brighton hospitals, their bodies were taken for cremation at a spot on Holt Hill, where funeral prayers were said and the ashes of the fallen scattered into the sea to complete the ceremonies.

The first cremation took place on 31 December 1914.

Today the Chattri Memorial situated above Patcham within the South Downs setting is a meeting of east and west, and a testimony to "those Hindu warriors born in remote villages, for whom the wildest imagination would never have suggested at their birth that their funeral fires would be fanned by the winds that swept those Sussex hills..." (Brighton Herald, 29 Jan 1921)

Connection with my son

Modern life is full of distractions and juicy quick internet interludes that often do not reap much nutrition for the soul. I long to know my dear son more deeply. He is now 25 and a busy PhD student at university in a city two hours from our home. We had often talked about a hiking adventure but I felt it had to be at least a plane trip away to be able to tear him from the books. My hunch is that people need extended time and a congenial space to connect deeply. Seven days alone walking provides adequate time to peck over a number of subjects and share memories and ideas. Dave and I may not always agree but we both long to be understood and grapple with meaning and purpose in a fast-paced changing world.

**Connection with the unknown**

The unknown is perhaps an unnerving element but a key ingredient for an adventure. True adventures are more than “pony-rides in May sunshine” as Bilbo Baggins remarked in *The Hobbit*. Dave and I are both adventurers at heart so we had to accept that walking makes us vulnerable and contributes to our frailty. Could we both walk 100 miles in seven days? Would inclement weather hinder us? Would our accommodation, (located through the South Downs website) be hospitable and comfortable? These were all categories we just had to launch out into and see what they made of us. Doing something hard and something risky made it more memorable. In fact, Dave probably winces a bit at the mention of the Seven Sisters descents close to Eastbourne and his knee tendon pain!

Final reflections

For the last 10 years I have taken small groups of men on simple, non-extravagant, 3 to 4 day walking trips into the local countryside around our town here in central Nebraska. I am convinced that many men will come alive through these outdoor adventures that have similar features to our SDW trek. I don't consider myself a very rugged outdoorsman but, through the simplicity of walking, much is known. As someone has said “the way is made by walking”.

A father and son's journey to connect with the past, present and future



Nebraska native John Lillyman and his son Dave recently walked the South Downs Way. Here's John's moving account of the 100-mile journey that was far more than just a very long walk.

Why would a father and son travel all the way from Kearney, Nebraska (right in the centre of the USA) to walk the SDW? “Connection” is the short answer.

Connection with the past

Southern England is where I met my American wife 36 years ago, just north of Petersfield, and from where my mother's family, the Rofe's, immigrated to Australia five generations ago. In fact, travelling in the train from London to our starting point of Winchester the words popped into my head “you are home”. I have a hunch that generations of family heritage in one place carry associations into generations to come. Would this part of the world hold the same pull for my son?

Connection with the landscape

Along the trail, and at 3 mph, the brain is taking in a multitude of vivid images that stimulate the mind and then linger in the subconscious, stored away in the memory banks. They are friendly images, restorative images. For me I need to process this information by carrying a journal, writing and painting small watercolors. Objects, buildings and landscapes attach to me and shape me like happy relationships with people. As an architect, I feel I get my aesthetic tank filled up to over-flowing by the incredible natural and man-made beauty of this part of the world. You who live in the UK need to be reminded of the astounding heritage you have at your doorstep.

New initiative to protect our vital drinking water

Southern Water is offering farms in the Brighton and Worthing region the opportunity to get rid of unwanted pesticides on a free and confidential basis.

Many farmers have out-of-date or unwanted chemicals in store that can be costly or awkward to dispose of.

To avoid them getting into the water supply, the utility provider is offering to help farmers remove them safely.

Southern Water has teamed up with Chem Clear, a specialist chemical waste collection and disposal company, and is offering free collections for up to 75 litres.

The initiative supports Brighton ChaMP for Water, which was established to protect and improve the quality of groundwater in the Brighton Chalk Block as a valuable natural resource for public water supply.

The project is a collaboration between Southern Water, the South Downs National Park Authority, the Environment Agency, the University of Brighton and Brighton & Hove City Council, working together with Natural England and the Brighton and Lewes Downs UNESCO Biosphere (the Living Coast) to protect the aquifer.



Robin Kelly, Catchment Risk Management Officer for Southern Water, said: "Pesticide amnesties have been a great success in other areas where they have been offered and Southern Water is really pleased we are now able to roll this out in our drinking water catchments on the South Downs.

"We hope this will give farmers and growers the chance to have a clear out of all those part containers and any banned substances that may be a concern for them.

"Schemes like this help to raise the profile of the South Downs as an important source of public drinking water and we hope the confidential nature of the scheme builds trust going forwards."

To arrange a collection, contact Chem Clear by 30 November 2019 on chemclearltdamnesty@gmail.com

WIN a holiday in the South Downs



The clock is counting down to the first draw of a new community lottery aimed at further protecting and enhancing the National Park for future generations.

The initiative has been launched by the South Downs National Park Trust, the official charity of the National Park.

With a top prize of £25,000, the first draw will take place on Saturday, November 23.

To mark the launch of the initiative, a bolt-on prize will be won on the night comprising a holiday in the South Downs, thanks to Best of Brighton Holiday Lettings.

Julie Fawcett, Chair of the Trust, said: "This community lottery is an innovative way to support the charity's vital work in caring for the landscape, biodiversity and local communities of the National Park.

"We want to see more rare habitats protected, more local communities thriving and more people able to access the National Park.

"This requires more investment and we want to direct the substantial goodwill that exists for the South Downs to places where it can make a real difference.

"A community lottery is one of the ways we're raising funds to support our work. It adds an element of fun to giving that encourages people to sign up to a regular, modest contribution to the charity.

"With every charity's budget under increasing pressure, it provides a great opportunity to help the Trust raise additional money to fund worthwhile causes."

For more details on the Lottery and to join visit www.southdownslottery.co.uk

**SOUTH DOWNS
NATIONAL PARK TRUST**

Things to do in the South Downs this November

Find these and more events across the National Park and submit your own events at southdowns.gov.uk/events/



- Join the **Heyshott Hike** on 12 November. Take part in this guided walk, led by a National Park Ranger and exploring the heathland and its wildlife.
- Enjoy a gentle guided walk on 21 November at the **Lord's Piece Pootle**, led by National Park Ranger Charles Winchester.
- Listen to a **fascinating talk** by Ben Law, Woodsman and Eco Builder, at Lodsworth Village Hall on 22 November.
- Visit the inaugural **Eco Fair** at Gilbert White's House in Selbourne on 23 November.
- Get into the festive spirit at the Bolney Wine Estate **Christmas Fayre**, complete with Santa's Grotto, on 23 November.

YOU SAY:

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



To submit a comment for our newsletter please email newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk. For a fast and direct response to your questions please email info@southdowns.gov.uk

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

SIGN UP TO THIS NEWSLETTER

Sign up to receive this newsletter by email every month. With the latest South Downs news, stories, ideas for days out, competitions, to hear about our ranger and volunteers' work and much more.

www.southdowns.gov.uk/join-the-newsletter/