

DOWNLAND THYMES

NEWS FOR THE SOUTH DOWNS VOLUNTEER
RANGER SERVICE ISSUE 86 | WINTER 2019

FESTIVE FRONDS PLANTS OF THE PARK

Cowdray Castle ruins
and mistletoe
© Duncan Vere Green

MISTLETOE, *VISCUS ALBUM*, A WOODY, PARASITIC SHRUB NATIVE TO BRITAIN IS FOUND LOCALLY IN SUSSEX BUT MORE FREQUENTLY IN THE WEST OF THE COUNTY.

Although mistletoe is parasitic it seldom kills its host if kept in bounds by harvesting. It has been cultivated since at least the 18th century. Nurserymen still supply it growing on apple trees.

It is found most often in orchards, parklands, gardens and churchyards and is therefore commonly associated with areas of human habitation on cultivated or deliberately planted trees. It is impossible to know how many specimens have been deliberately cultivated, but clumps in high branches of tall trees are likely to have been sown by birds.

In Sussex there are colonies of mistletoe on parkland lime trees in Parham Park, Cowdray Park, Petworth Park and Lavington Park. At Parham it also grows on ancient hawthorns. In the mid-19th century mistletoe was so abundant in Cowdray Park that cartloads were cut before Christmas.

If you know of mistletoe plants growing in your area, the Sussex Botanical Recording Society (see right) would love to hear from you with a grid reference if possible.

**KATE FRANKLAND, VOLUNTEER
RANGER EASTERN DOWNS**

Mistletoe can occur on up to 200 species of trees although rarely on conifers. Apple is the most common host, but it also occurs on lime, hawthorn, crack willow, poplar, robinia, field maple, sycamore, elm, horse chestnut, ash, whitebeam and rowan.

Try growing your own:

- Find a mature host tree, thin bark is best
- Rub a ripe berry onto the underside of a strong branch and tie securely with muslin
- If it 'takes' the root will penetrate the host tree and shoot
- Male and female plants are needed near to each other to produce berries
- Flowers form slowly over several months and open around February. They are pollinated by insects, particularly bees, as in other fruiting plants
- Berries can take up to a year to ripen.

IN THIS ISSUE:

2

CHAIRMAN'S
CORNER &
TEAM UPDATE

4

MEET
THE NEW
RANGERS

6

INSPIRED BY
THE DOWNS

8

VCF

11

HEDGEROWS
REVISITED

12

YOUR REVIEWS

14

AUTHORITY
NEWS

16

BUZZING
ACTIVITY

Acknowledgments:

mistletoe.org.uk the website
of mistletoe enthusiast
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sussexflora.org.uk Nelson,
Dawn, Sussex Botanical
Recording Society

'The Flora of Sussex'
F. Abrahams, M. Briggs,
P. Harms, A. Hoare, A. Knapp,
T. Lording, B. Scott, M. Shaw,
D. Streeter, & N. Stuart
(Eds. 2018) Newbury: Pisces.



CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

Another year is coming to a close; it has been eventful for us on the Committee, with the new Volunteer Conservation Fund taking off so very well, an extremely enjoyable AGM in March and rounded off with some interesting courses on woodlands and fungi.

It has also been good to see many of you out and about over the year and I'm pleased that we have had requests for funds to help several of you with Area social activities. We also have approved a request for Travel Fellowship funding for a group of volunteers from the Wealden Heath Area to visit Bardsey Island in North Wales to do some conservation work there in the spring.

Arrangements are confirmed for next year's AGM on 28 March 2020, to be held in the Linklater Pavilion at Lewes. I'm very pleased that we have managed to get Neil Hulme as the guest speaker; he will be talking on 'Rewilding' and has extensive knowledge of the Knepp Estate project working there as a member of the Advisory Board and as a guide. We will also be seeking new members to the Committee at that AGM, as both I and the treasurer, Mike Ellis, will be standing down. I do hope that we can attract some new faces to work on the Committee, duties are not very onerous or time consuming – just four meetings a year with two of them by video, so why not give it a go?

Finally, I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, thank you all for your commitment and time in support of our important work in the South Downs.

RON WILDER, VRS CHAIR



UPDATE FROM THE VOLUNTEERING TEAM

AUTUMN 2019 WAS A BUMPER SEASON FOR MUSHROOMS AND THEREFORE A GREAT TIME TO HOLD OUR FIRST FUNGI ID TRAINING SESSIONS.

Volunteers were given the opportunity to learn more about the amazing ecology and culture of mushrooms. The training sessions held really interesting discussions about why British culture has become so removed from foraging wild mushrooms whereas one volunteer recounted witnessing Russian government officials heading straight out onto Hampstead Heath in the 1970s to look for fungi! Hopefully there was also some useful advice for those of you with bracket fungi growing at the bottom of trees in your gardens and what response is required, if at all. I know many of you will not see Christmas in the same way ever again...

December is the end of the fungi season and the arrival of colder temperatures. This is a fantastic time to improve your understanding of trees by participating in a spot of winter tree ID while volunteering. Learning the buds and bark of trees in winter gives an understanding of species that can be used when the leaves arrive again in the spring. It's also a time to welcome wintering species to the Downs. The flocks of redwings migrating over our villages, towns and cities by night can be identified with a typical *tseep* call as they zip overhead. Then there are their cousins, fieldfares, with

a name pointing to their movement and constant travel across the open country. In the south we're also lucky to have the winter influx of the goldcrest's close relative, the firecrest. These stunning birds weigh as little as a 5p piece and can be found in the ivy and holly-heavy woods of the Weald throughout the winter. In the marshes and river valleys waders and wildfowl will be arriving in their thousands to spend the winter.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our 300 volunteers for all the time you have offered to the South Downs National Park in 2019. From everyone here at the South Downs National Park Authority we hope you have a relaxing Christmas break and look forward to seeing you again in the New Year.

DANIEL GREENWOOD,
SDNPA VOLUNTEER
DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

Above:
Volunteers during fungi ID training in Buriton in October

© Daniel Greenwood



We were delighted to hear that two of our volunteer groups, the Heathlands Reunited volunteers who produced a book about the tales and mini-histories of our heaths, and our Youth Ambassadors, have been highly commended in the **National Parks UK Volunteer Awards** group category. Congratulations to both groups on your achievements in respectively highlighting the unique heritage of the South Downs and in championing the youth voice.

Top: Highly commended for HeRe – tales and mini histories of our heaths
Youth Ambassadors Kirstie Ferris and Cameron MacDonald
© SDNPA Daniel Greenwood



KATHRYN STEELE – PROVIDING VOLUNTEER SUPPORT



Welcome to Kat Steele a new Support Services Officer for the South Downs National Park Authority. Kat will be monitoring the vrs@southdowns.gov.uk email account and will be able to assist with any volunteering enquiries you may have across the different areas.

Kat has a background in ecology with five years experience of completing species surveys. She is licensed to handle great crested newts and is a bat carer, often rehabilitating bats at her home. Currently also studying for an MSc in Environmental Management, Kat is looking forward to visiting the different areas within the Park and helping volunteers enjoy their time supporting the National Park.

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Thank you for all the interesting articles, reviews and photos that you have sent in for inclusion over the year. We have enjoyed reading them all and have tried to include as many as possible. We seem to have a flurry of new starters to introduce you to in this edition. Hopefully you will now be able to put a few faces to names and vice versa when you see them out and about. We also have a wonderful new gang of Apprentice Rangers to introduce you to but they will have to wait for another edition.

Next year is the 10th anniversary of the South Downs National Park. Part of our celebrations will include a special edition of Downland Thymes in March 2020 incorporating any of your stories about being a volunteer with the South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service over this time. Please get your thinking caps on and start pulling together ideas for inclusion in the newsletter. As ever, please send anything appropriate to dt@southdowns.gov.uk. The deadline for the March edition is **27 January 2020**.

If you can, take some time for yourself over the Christmas break and get out for a few invigorating walks in those beautiful South Downs, or as Hilaire Belloc called them "the great hills of the South Country".

Happy Christmas!

CHARLIE HELLEWELL,
EDITOR, DOWNLAND THYMES



MEET THE NEW RANGER AND ASSISTANT RANGERS

CRAIG DATERS, LEAD RANGER CENTRAL DOWNS TEAM



Started

October 2019

Major projects

The main bulk of my work over the next six months is to support the awesome Central Downs team in their day to day work and try to add value and make their jobs easier. Also to fully understand the breadth of the work being undertaken across the Central Downs area and where and how it fits in with the Authority's Corporate and Partnership Plans. Also I need to get to know my new patch which covers the area between Angmering and Storrington in the west and the River Adur in the East and to meet and work alongside the landowners and managers and other stakeholders such as you volunteers.

Previously...

I worked with the RSPB in Scotland, Devon and Dorset, Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and most recently as a Ranger at the New Forest National Park. This was primarily an engagement and outreach role, working with a very wide range of groups and stakeholders, focusing on enjoyment, understanding and protecting.

Interests

Apart from the usual of walking – I love the ancient yews at Kingley Vale, cycling, learning about our flora and fauna, trying to find inventive ways to reverse their decline and trying to not mention the 'B' word, I spend the rest of my time with my two young children and my wife.

If you want to know where there are some really good rope swings in the New Forest, give me a shout!



SOPHIE BROWN, ASSISTANT RANGER, CENTRAL TEAM

Started

February 2019

Major projects

I've been out with volunteers from our Wednesday, Friday and Sunday teams. We also work towards the eastern part of our patch at Clayton Farm and Church Copse where our volunteer team have started their seasonal coppicing work. We have been setting up butterfly transects with volunteers and training volunteers to carry these out on interesting local sites. We are looking to increase the surveying opportunities for volunteers including lapwing surveys, riverfly monitoring and nightingale surveys.

Previously...

I worked at the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust in the water meadows and chalk grassland sites around Winchester before starting in the South Downs.

Interests

Outside of work I enjoy birding, bouldering, playing the piano and Dungeons & Dragons. One of my favourite places to be is in waders in a chalk stream!



OLLIE SEAL, ASSISTANT RANGER, CENTRAL TEAM

Started

September 2019

Major projects

Working with volunteer groups, undertaking practical tasks across the Central area. So far I have been getting to know everyone while undertaking tasks such as coppicing at

Church Copse and removing willow along the River Ems.

Previously...

I was a Seasonal Assistant Ranger with Waverley Borough Council at Frensham Great Pond where I helped to manage the site during the busy spring/summer period. This mainly included site maintenance, conservation work and on particularly busy days patrolling the beach/responding to incidents. I also worked as a Volunteer Assistant Warden at the Pulborough Brooks RSPB reserve where I undertook a 12 month internship.

Interests

Satisfying my thirst for adrenaline by doing domestic chores and going for walks.



ABBI GRAY, ASSISTANT RANGER, WEALDEN HEATH TEAM

Started

January 2019

Major Projects

I work regularly with the volunteers to manage sites across all the ranger's patches in the Wealden Heath team. I am also currently working on individual projects for each ranger, including an access improvement project along the Rother Walk with Angela, a project creating accessible round walks off the Serpent Trail with Charles

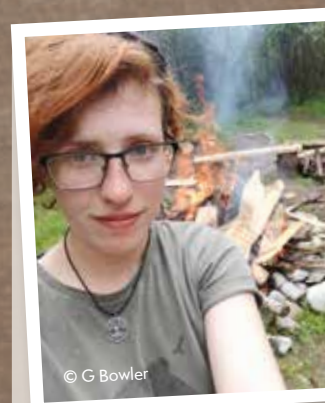
and planning the restoration and future management of a new SSSI heathland site at Woolmer Forest with Kate. I also have a joint River Fly monitoring scheme with Sophie in the Central team.

Previously...

I moved to the SDNPA from Northumberland but am originally from Sheffield, so have a confusing accent. Before working as an Assistant Ranger I was building up experience for this role by working as a Survey Assistant, monitoring for the presence of bat roosts and great crested newts. I also worked alongside a tree surgeon as a groundsman whilst retraining and studying for my diploma in Countryside Management and Conservation.

Interests

Outside of work I spend my time walking, filling my house with things I collect whilst wandering and making things.



GRACE BOWLER, ASSISTANT RANGER, EASTERN AREA TEAM

Started

October 2019

Major projects

I have taken over the management of the Seven Sisters Volunteer Rangers organising the rotas and leading some tasks. I will also be helping other rangers with their projects and sites.

Previously...

I was a Trainee for Natural England, working on a peat bog restoration project in Shropshire.

Interests

I am a volunteer with the Iceland conservation volunteers which means I often spend my summer holidays in Iceland leading groups of volunteers in trail work. I enjoy being outdoors as much as possible hiking, camping, mountain biking and sailing.



MICHAELA 'MICKY' PAPE, ASSISTANT RANGER, WEALDEN HEATH TEAM

Started

October 2019

Major Projects

Working with VRS teams on Tuesday and Thursday weekly, Wednesday fortnightly and Sundays monthly. I hope to be involved with projects relating to cultural heritage but still keen to be out onsite chain-sawing and having bonfires.

Previously...

I have spent the last two years working for the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust as an Assistant Reserves Officer responsible for chalk downland, woodland

and floodplain meadow sites. Before that I was a member of the VRS and previously worked for Royal Armouries and Portsmouth Historic Dockyard.

Interests

Medieval re-enactment (fighting and gunnery), archery, painting miniatures and making model aircraft, birding.



MAX SHELDON, ASSISTANT RANGER, EASTERN AREA TEAM

Started

December 2017, permanent from March 2019

Major Projects

When I began, my main job was to manage the Stanmer VRS but we have been down an assistant ranger since March (until now), so I have been managing both sets of volunteer groups in the Eastern Downs Area; Stanmer and Seven Sisters. That is 44% of VRS! I lead practical conservation tasks and assist the rangers on an array of projects. Apart from

daily volunteer management I have been carrying out practical site management on chalk grassland, combating invasive non-native species such as Himalayan balsam and parrots feather, and improving/restoring some of the dew ponds in our area.

Previously...

I was doing a yearlong ranger internship with Surrey Wildlife Trust. I live in and come from Surrey.

Interests

Going out for walks exploring the countryside with my dog, wildlife watching (particularly birds) and growing vegetables up on the allotment.



INSPIRED BY THE DOWNS

Up above Standean Bottom looking across
to Bird Brow and Castle Hill, oil on board

MY HUSBAND AND I HAVE BEEN VOLUNTEERS WITH THE BRIGHTON, STANMER BRANCH FOR NEARLY TWO YEARS.

In my spare time I like to paint landscapes in oil and have been inspired by some of our beautiful surroundings on our Tuesdays out with the Rangers. One of my favourite aspects of volunteer days is when we all sit together for coffee and lunch, often on the top of a hill and watch the changing face of the Downs being transformed by the weather and light.

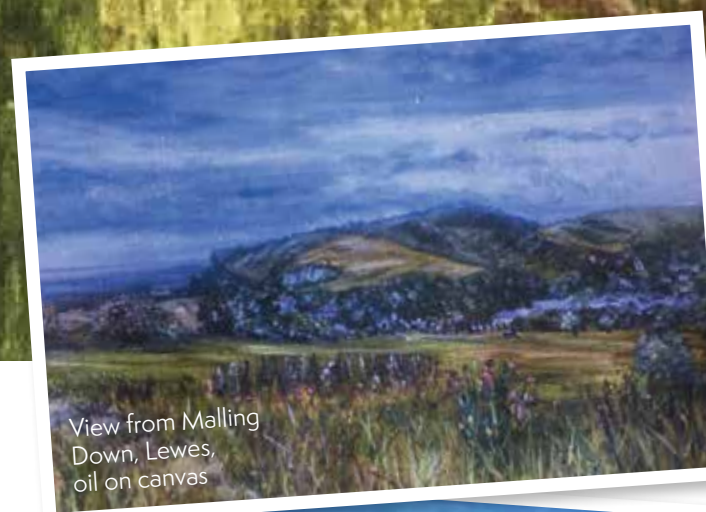
Standean Bottom – this was actually based on a photo taken by my fellow volunteer Janet Considine whilst she was out walking with her dog (you can see him in the painting if you look hard enough!) on the Downs in

the area where we had carried out a number of tasks on a Tuesday. The poppies and wild flowers are a beautiful feature of the Downs and I wanted to try and capture their colour in my painting. Oil on board.

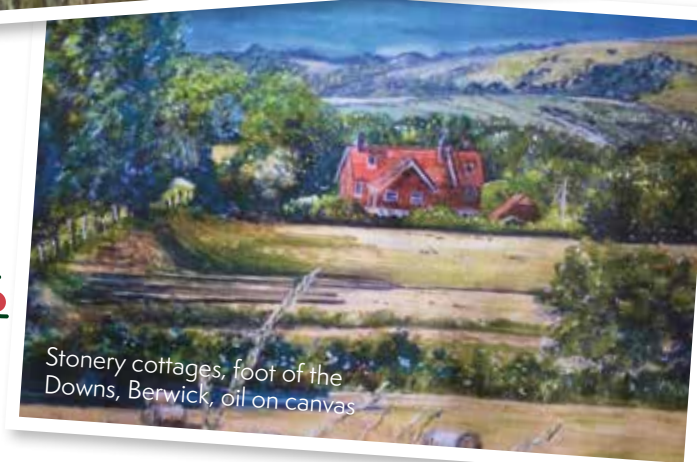
Malling Down – painted from a photograph I took this year while out with the volunteers pulling ragwort on the Downs near Lewes old racecourse. It was an extremely windy day and quite showery. I liked the atmosphere of the cloudy skies and the typical British summertime weather! Painted in oil on canvas.

Stonery Cottages – based on a photo I took while walking my dog in Berwick where I live. The view characterised the beauty of the South Downs and the way villages, farms and dwellings often cluster around the foot of the hills. I particularly like the long shadows in this painting. Oil on canvas.

CAROL PALMER,
VOLUNTEER RANGER,
STANMER, EASTERN DOWNS



View from Malling
Down, Lewes,
oil on canvas



Stonery cottages, foot of the
Downs, Berwick, oil on canvas

Paintings © Carol Palmer

ODE TO THE APPLE

To all you Apple trees, we doff our hats!
Pour cider mongst your roots.
With such a merry dancing that
The pippin gladly shoots.

So here's to the old Apple tree.
Stand fast root, bear well to top
Allow the pollen to float free.
Pray bring to us a heavy Apple crop.

Every bough,
Bear an Apple now
Every twig, bear an Apple large,
No wind to discharge.

Picked in warmth and Love,
God's bounty from above.
Hats and hands full,
Three quarter sacks full.

Stored dark, cool and dry,
Ready for the pie.
Squeezed, pressed ready for,
The likes of you and I to try!

To drink at Wassail.
Good health!
Thanks to Nature's wealth.
Waes hael!

ROGER P. READ
TWELFTH NIGHT, 2019



HOME FARM ORCHARD

I was inspired to write this in January this year after a very enjoyable and informative day, working on orchard maintenance, for permaculture at Stanmer Park. Peter May who I consider the 'Apple Guru', was our brilliant task leader. After the day's work was completed with the inevitable bonfire, we were invited to a Wassail later that evening at Home Farm Orchard. To which my daughter and I went.

The permaculture cider and apple juice was delicious and the whole event was great fun. A huge bonfire, torch procession, lots of children, singing, fiddle band and dancing. It all made for a truly magical evening. I would thoroughly recommend it for this coming January to anyone interested.

ROGER READ,
VOLUNTEER RANGER, STANMER, EASTERN DOWNS

VOLUNTEER CONSERVATION FUND



From left: Preparing the ground for sowing wildflower meadow.
© Matthew Sennitt

Collapsed fencing at Wolstonbury Hill dew pond which will be replaced. © National Trust

Part of the footpath which is to be reinstated.
© Willett Charitable Trust



Botany Bay Community Interest Organisation – cutting turf in preparation for sowing a wildflower meadow.
© Anne Denny

WHEN THE SDNPA WAS FIRST SET UP, THE BODY THAT PREVIOUSLY OVERSAW VRS ACTIVITIES (THE SOUTH DOWNS JOINT COMMITTEE) DECIDED THAT REMAINING UNALLOCATED FUNDS COULD, WITH AGREEMENT FROM FUNDING ORGANISATIONS (LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND NATURAL ENGLAND), BE DONATED TO THE VRS.

Consequently, £29,000 was placed in the SDNPA accounts in 2013 as a 'VRS Conservation Reserve' to be expressly used by the VRS on conservation projects in the South Downs.

Since that time only two projects were supported – the South Pond restoration at Midhurst and the West Meon School Nature Reserve on the Meon Valley Railway. Further projects for using this funding have been slow in coming forward; possibly because we needed someone from the VRS to project manage them.

Consequently, the VRS Committee, in collaboration with SDNPA staff and the South Downs National Park Trust have developed a new approach. The remaining

conservation funds have been handed to the SDNP Trust, which have created the Volunteer Conservation Fund, which is available for any organisation to apply for support to assist with a project within the Park.

Each application must identify clear goals, how it will aid delivery of the SDNPA Partnership Management Plan and identify opportunities for VRS practical help. Thus the project management is moved to partners applying for funds rather than VRS members involved in the work.

In this first year of operation the fund received 20 grant applications. This was a fantastic number, particularly given this was a 'pilot' year. The number was certainly helped by the terrific support given to the launch

by the SDNPA Communications team, the simple guidelines and minimal form filling.

The grant applications were all worthwhile and aligned with the aims of the fund. As one might expect the applications were also very varied – from hedge planting/ laying to support for an educational project.

The tricky task of deciding which projects to fund involved a two-step process. Firstly, the Lead Rangers from each area discussed the entries to provide guidance to the VRS Committee on those they could practically support through their volunteer teams. Secondly, an enlarged VRS Committee meeting (including senior members of the South Downs National Park Trust and a Lead Ranger representative) made the final decisions.

As so many of the grant applications were worth supporting, the VRS Committee decided to award more money than the £5,000 originally envisaged for this year.

In total £7,827.92 of grant money was agreed to support six of the applications. The extra money being provided directly by the South Downs National Park Trust.

MIKE ELLIS, VRS TREASURER

If you would like further information about the Volunteer Conservation Fund or would like to make a donation please contact mark.rose@southdowns.gov.uk or visit southdownstrust.org.uk/vcf

"This is a great opportunity for organisations in need of support to deliver a small element of work or to invest in a larger project. Projects from the first round of the new fund have made a big difference for people and wildlife in the landscapes of the South Downs. We hope the fund can continue to make a big difference for South Downs voluntary organisations supporting access to the countryside, biodiversity enhancements and local community projects."

Daniel Greenwood, SDNPA's Volunteer Development Officer

The successful applicants who received grants towards their projects this year are as follows.

- 1 Botany Bay Community Interest Organisation (£1,619.12).** For riparian woodland work, wildflower meadow planting, invasive species removal and bird nesting at their site near Duncton, West Sussex.
- 2 National Trust (£600).** For appropriate wildflower meadow plug plants around the recently restored dewpond at Bignor, West Sussex.
- 3 Stanmer Organics (£540).** For equipment and materials for the National Plant Collection [Sussex Apple Varieties] at Stanmer Park, East Sussex.
- 4 Railway Land Wildlife Trust (£1,500).** For renovations and improvements to the signal box and surrounding habitats at the Linklater Pavilion in Lewes, East Sussex.
- 5 Willett Charitable Trust (£455).** For footpath reinstatement at Bishopstone, East Sussex.
- 6 National Trust (£3,113.80).** For re-fencing of Pangdean and Wolstonbury Hill dewponds at Saddlescombe Farm, West Sussex.

MY FAVOURITE WALK



MY GRANDMOTHER'S HOME DEEP IN THE PENNINES WAS A RENTED COTTAGE. THE FRONT DOOR OPENED ONTO A LANE, FIELDS AND FARMLAND, THE SIDE DOOR OPENED ONTO THE FARM YARD.

I loved being able to jump out of the car and to be transported immediately into another world and made a wish, more a vow, that one day I too would live somewhere from where I could open the back door and walk straight onto fields and into wide open countryside.

For nearly 30 years I have lived on the South Downs Way, and for the past seven years my partner and I have been volunteer South Downs Way Wardens. We look after the stretch that runs from Housedean Farm over to Southease.

Travelling by either the 28 or 29 bus to/ from Brighton, request to alight at The Newmarket Inn. Walk past the Esso garage on your right, turning right between it and the pub to head up the concrete track. The track continues up under the railway

bridge and onto the South Downs, passing two semi-detached houses on your left and the newly opened luxury holiday accommodation 'The Grain Store'.

Keep walking up the lane to the grey farm gate and opening up in front of you is Littledown – made up of rolling farmland reaching up to Juggs Road, the track that becomes Kingston Ridge and drops down into Kingston. This time of year, the ploughed and planted brown soil may have a hue of white, a light covering of frost or snow. It is a long time since we had snow thick enough to enjoy trudging up the slope and the thrill of sledging down it fast.

Continue up the path, flanked on your right by a hedgerow. Walk towards Newmarket Plantation, a clump of trees straight ahead



Newmarket Plantation, the clump of trees at the very top of the path, before turning left towards Juggs Road track

© Anni Townend

of you, going through the farm gate and past the cattle trough.

Turn left at the trees and continue walking towards the brow of the hill through the wooden gate. On a clear day you will be able to see farm and Downland stretching far into the distance and straight ahead of you the sea! It is here where I stop, pause, take a few deep breaths, turn round and head home – grateful that my childhood wish came true.

Happy walking!

ANNI TOWNEND, VOLUNTEER
SOUTH DOWNS WAY WARDEN

Ploughed fields, with some snow, looking up to Juggs Road track on the ridge

© Anni Townend

For more about Anni and her love not only of walking but also of 'the walk and talk' which she incorporates into her work visit annitownend.com

If you would like to book a stay or a team away day at The Grain Store visit thegrainstorelewes.com



Ebernoe hedge revisited
© Jeremy Nason

HEDGEROWS REVISITED

I have often wondered how successful our task days have been. We record how the heathlands are changing with fixed point photography at the same point over different seasons for the Heathland Reunited project and so why not revisit the site of a task day or two.

I recently drove back to South Harting to take a look at a native hedge we planted earlier this year, in April. I remember the day well (as will my fellow VRS) as it seemed relatively late in the year to plant saplings in ground that appeared to be a bone dry mix of soil and chalk.



South Harting native hedge revisited
© Jeremy Nason

It took a little time to find the site again in South Harting, but eventually I parked and walked across the lane to see before me a line of canes and spirals disappearing into the distance – it was a large field!

Based on a rough sample of 200 saplings of the 500 or so planted by the VRS that day I only counted 10 that had perished. I call that success! I hope the farmer does too!

Besides planting hedges we also had the opportunity to lay a mature hedge. As I happened to be in the vicinity of Petworth recently I decided to revisit the Sussex Wildlife Trust site of an earlier hedge-laying task day at Ebernoe. While I could easily recall the day in January this year, I struggled to find the hedge until I eventually climbed across a stile and spotted the telltale signs of binding. I have to admit the hedge looked great and had filled out well; maybe the binding isn't up to professional standards but on the whole I was proud of the efforts we had made.

JEREMY NASON, VOLUNTEER
RANGER, WEALDEN HEATH



TASK LEADER TRAINING NEARLY WENT WITH A BANG...

Having been a Volunteer Ranger since 2003, it was about time I got my training as Task Leader underway, so that I could step in if the scheduled Task Leader dropped out or to lead a task myself. To that end, I undertook the classroom session in July and had my Shadow Task Leader Day set for a 'Dew Pond Clearance and Renovation' task in August.

Planning complete, everybody turned up on the day, the driver and first aider were nominated, and we completed the site briefing at the Dew Pond near Glyndebourne, to commence work.

We were soon busy clearing away barrow loads of spoil and filling buckets with waste water, the job was looking like a good 'un, as they say.

Then, when taking a spadeful of spoil, I heard a loud "clang", metal on metal. To be more precise, it was my spade and what appeared to be an unexploded mortar! Oops! Not good. We immediately stopped operations and retreated a safe distance whereupon Jan Knowlson, Eastern Area Ranger, called the Emergency Services.

We then undertook the longest tea break I have known since I joined the VRS, waiting for the Services to arrive. The police eventually arrived just after

13:00 hrs and immediately called for a 200m exclusion zone around the dew pond. We were obliged to pack our tools away and retreat further down the access lane, scuppering any notion of completing the job. Hence, and with palpable looks of disappointment on the volunteer rangers' faces, we had an unexpected early bath, and for myself, an Incident Report Form to complete. On reflection, this must be the equivalent of a player joining a new football club and scoring an own goal on his first outing.

The dew pond clearance continues the following Tuesday with another budding Task Leader in charge, so good luck to them, be careful what you dig up!

P.S. An email from Jan the next day informed us that the Bomb Squad arrived some four hours after we left and declared the bomb to be full of... mud!

RICHARD BOSWORTH,
VOLUNTEER
RANGER,
EASTERN
DOWNS

Unexploded mortar found in a dewpond
© Richard Bosworth



Dewpond diggers
© Richard Bosworth

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 George Inn, Eartham

Refurbished in 2016 this beautiful pub with its large wooden beams, snug interior and cosy furnishings is just what you need after a brisk walk around nearby Slindon Estate.

The menu is varied, with lots of options for vegetarians as well as meat lovers, every dish looks delicious. If you're visiting just for a drink then you're in luck as the bar has an excellent array of British wine, spirits and beers, including a confusingly tasty marshmallow dark ale! The staff are welcoming and friendly, and happy to let you try before you buy on the beer front. Nothing is too much trouble for them.

Muddy boots, children and dogs are welcome and there's a garden for sunnier days too. Definitely worth a visit whatever time of year.

TRADITIONAL
INN AWARD



The George Inn, Eartham,
West Sussex PO18 0LT
01243 814 340,
thegeorgeeartham.com



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

A YEAR IN THE WOODS: THE DIARY OF A FOREST RANGER

by Colin Elford

This delightful little book narrates Colin's life as a Forest Ranger on the Dorset/Wiltshire border. He is mostly alone apart from his dog, the creatures he encounters in his patch of woodland and the fulfilment he feels surrounded by nature on a daily basis.

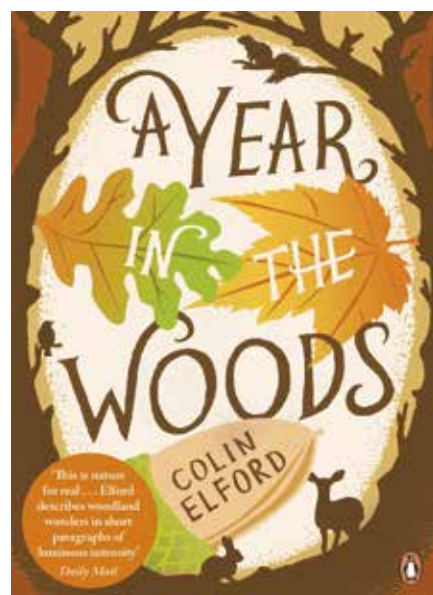
Working around the clock, the book tells of wildlife surveys, managing the deer population through culling and being

outside in all weathers. Every day is different and never dull with the woodland life around him, always ending the day by checking himself and his dog for the presence of ticks.

A helpful comprehensive glossary is also provided explaining woodland terminology.

Through this book I have been able to get an insight into my son's working life as a wildlife conservation officer with Forestry England in our local area.

LINDA SUTTON, VOLUNTEER RANGER,
EASTERN DOWNS



CAPTION COMPETITION



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

"WOULDN'T IT BE QUICKER
IF WE JUST BOUGHT
ANOTHER NEEDLE?"

RON WELLS, VOLUNTEER RANGER EASTERN DOWNS

If you have a volunteer photo that could have a funny caption please send to dt@southdowns.gov.uk



DID YOU KNOW?

MUD

"...the old Sussex dialect has over 30 words for mud. There's **clodgy** for a muddy field path after heavy rain; **gawm**- sticky, foul-smelling mud; **gubber**- black mud of rotting organic matter; **ike**- a muddy mess; **pug**- a sticky yellow Wealdon clay; **slab**- the thickest type of mud; **sleech**- mud or river sediment used for manure; **slob** or **slub**- thick mud; **slough**- a muddy hole; **slurry**- diluted mud, saturated with so much water that it cannot drain; **smeery**- wet and sticky surface mud; **stoach**- to trample ground to mud, like cattle; **stodge**- thick puddingy mud; **stug**- watery mud; and **swank**- a bog."

from *Wilding: The Return of Nature to a British Farm* by Isabella Tree



A muddy part of the South Downs Way which has since been fixed with help from the Mend our Way campaign of last year.

© SDNPA

DISCOUNTS FOR VOLUNTEERS

You'll be pleased to know that several retailers are offering discounts on the sorts of things you'll need in the countryside. The VRS has successfully negotiated discounts with:

Cotswold Outdoor, Snow & Rock, Gatleys, Runners Need, Clusons, JDSports/Millets/Blacks/Ultimate 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 SDVRS Volunteer Information webpage sites.google.com/view/southdowns/ 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 for a replacement.



SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK TRUST LOTTERY

THE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK TRUST HAS LAUNCHED THE SOUTH DOWNS LOTTERY, IT'S A FUN WAY TO SUPPORT THE CONSERVATION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK WHILE ALSO OFFERING A CHANCE TO WIN UP TO £25,000.

CHRISTMAS DRAW

As well as being in the draw for £25,000, one ticket holder will win a **magnum of the premier English sparkling wine, Nyetimber's Classic Cuvée** (see inset).

The draw will take place on 14 December 2019 and the prize will be delivered to the lucky winner before Christmas – buy your tickets before this date to ensure that you also have a chance to win this special prize!

Visit southdownslottery.co.uk or call **01730 631632** for more information and for terms and conditions.



SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK TRUST LOTTERY



- By participating in the Lottery or by donating to the South Downs National Park Trust, southdownstrust.org.uk/how-to-give you will be supporting the wildlife, landscape and communities of the National Park. With your help the Trust can support the delivery of projects such as:
- Bee-Lines** – Improving habitat for bees, butterflies and other pollinators which are in decline by restoring chalk grassland and creating wildflower meadows. southdownstrust.org.uk/beelines
- Mend Our Way** – repairing the most damaged parts of the South Downs Way which is used by over 500,000 people each year.
- School Travel Grant** – supporting more children to access the outdoor learning

- environment of the National Park by providing travel grants to schools for educational visits. learning.southdowns.gov.uk/learning/travel-grant
- Volunteer Conservation Fund** – working with the Volunteer Ranger Service to support voluntary groups that want to improve their local area by offering grants for things like tools, consumables and materials. southdownstrust.org.uk/vcf
- Sustainable Communities Fund** – supporting communities that want to conserve and enhance the National Park's wildlife, cultural heritage and community cohesion by offering grants of up to £10,000. southdownstrust.org.uk/scf

For more details visit southdownstrust.org.uk/how-to-give/

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



YOUTH ACTION EVENTS

Our series of Youth Action days over the summer and autumn allowed young people to act locally to make a difference to the environment. They joined together to protect precious pollinators at Kithurst Hill, to identify heathland wildlife and to reduce the impact of invasive species and plastic pollution in the South Downs. We asked our Youth Ambassadors to tell us what this Youth Action was all about.

Litter picking at Seven Sisters Country Park



Images © SDNPA

South Downs Youth Action is just getting started and we have big plans for 2020. Please search for South Downs Youth Action online to find out more or join the mailing list by emailing Daniel.Greenwood@southdowns.gov.uk

#iwill4nature #southdowns



Youth action learning how to identify heathland wildlife © SDNPA

YOUTH ACTION: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

It was a gathering of like-minded individuals from the younger generation who have taken up the fight against decline in the natural world, allowing them to be in a situation where they do not feel alone in this struggle.

Our aim was to gain a better understanding of the natural world in which we live, taking note of the highs and lows that our habitats are going through. Some of our fellow participants were commendably interested in taking up the field of nature conservation whether that be through science or through physical conservation tasks. But for many it was their curiosity that got the better of them. They were intrigued by the National Park; what it was all about; what the Park does; and as is often the case, many of the young people had no idea about things that were right on their doorstep or just a few miles away.

That's what Youth Action is also about, learning and understanding. It is far easier to make a difference when you understand what's in front of you than when you have only discussed it in a classroom.

CAMERON MCDONALD,
YOUTH AMBASSADOR

Some of the young people who came were interested in gaining experience in the conservation sector. Yet they gained so much more. Young people made friends with others they might not otherwise have met, they learnt how their actions volunteering on the day fed into the bigger picture and they got to enjoy the great outdoors and the stunning views across the Downs.

Species decline and the climate crisis is at the forefront of many young people's minds and South Downs Youth Action Days give young people the chance to make a direct positive impact on their local environment. While at Cuckmere Haven the plastic pollution crisis was easy to see first-hand, the young people taking part in litter picking got great satisfaction from clearing away some of the plastic. Some even spoke of reducing their own plastic consumption.

South Downs Youth Action gives young people the ability to take part in practical conservation tasks but what they learn and how they feel is much more important than completing the task.

KIRSTIE FERRIS,
YOUTH AMBASSADOR





West Grinstead Ploughing Match event stand in action
© Laura Warren/SDNPA

BUZZING ACTIVITY



HELPING AT SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK EVENTS

Saturday 21 September was a beautiful sunny day for the West Grinstead ploughing match show which is held at different farms each year. This year it was at Applesham Farm next door to Lancing College in West Sussex where my honey bees are sited so I offered to help on the SDNPA stand.

With my interest in beekeeping in mind, Events Manager Laura Warren asked if I would help on the Beelines Project table. Laura explained the Beelines Project to me and showed me the packets of 'bee bombs' to hand out (donations welcome!). Bee bombs are clay pellets containing wildflower seeds which can be thrown onto bare ground at this time of year. Some of the seeds should grow in the spring or the next year into wildflowers to help support our precious pollinators.

As the wonderful Monty Don had, the previous night on BBC Gardeners World, been sowing his wildflower meadow it was easy to encourage passers-by to take some and to give a donation. We were well situated near the pub and food vans

so had a continual procession of people at both SDNPA tables as well as at the Events van where Norman engaged many people in conversation with the large map of the National Park.

I had also brought some jars of my local honey which sold well with £1 from each jar donated to the Project which along with the bee-bombs raised £152 in donations that day.

This year I also helped at Pulborough Harvest Fair and I do recommend volunteering at these events even for half a day, as you meet such interesting people from all walks of life to chat with about the beauty of the National Park. I am definitely going to offer again but maybe on a town centred event for a change, as it would be good to encourage people who maybe do not normally visit the Downs to get out and enjoy them.

Now, let me see, when is that Dark Skies Festival as I must book up soon to join a session?

HELENA LEWIS, VOLUNTEER RANGER, CENTRAL AREA



West Grinstead Ploughing Match – Bee Bombs
© Laura Warren/SDNPA

For information about volunteering at South Downs National Park events please contact events@southdowns.gov.uk

beelines
SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK
PROTECT OUR POLLINATORS

Launched in April 2019 by the South Downs National Park Trust and aiming to raise £75,000, the Beelines Project will be working with farmers and partners within the Arun to Adur area, to create wildflower corridors across Downland, linking species rich chalk grassland to sites which are in need of pollination. For more information visit southdownstrust.org.uk

**SOUTH DOWNS
VOLUNTEER
RANGER SERVICE**

**SOUTH DOWNS
NATIONAL PARK**

Downland Thymes: News for the South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service. Issue 86, December 2019. © 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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