

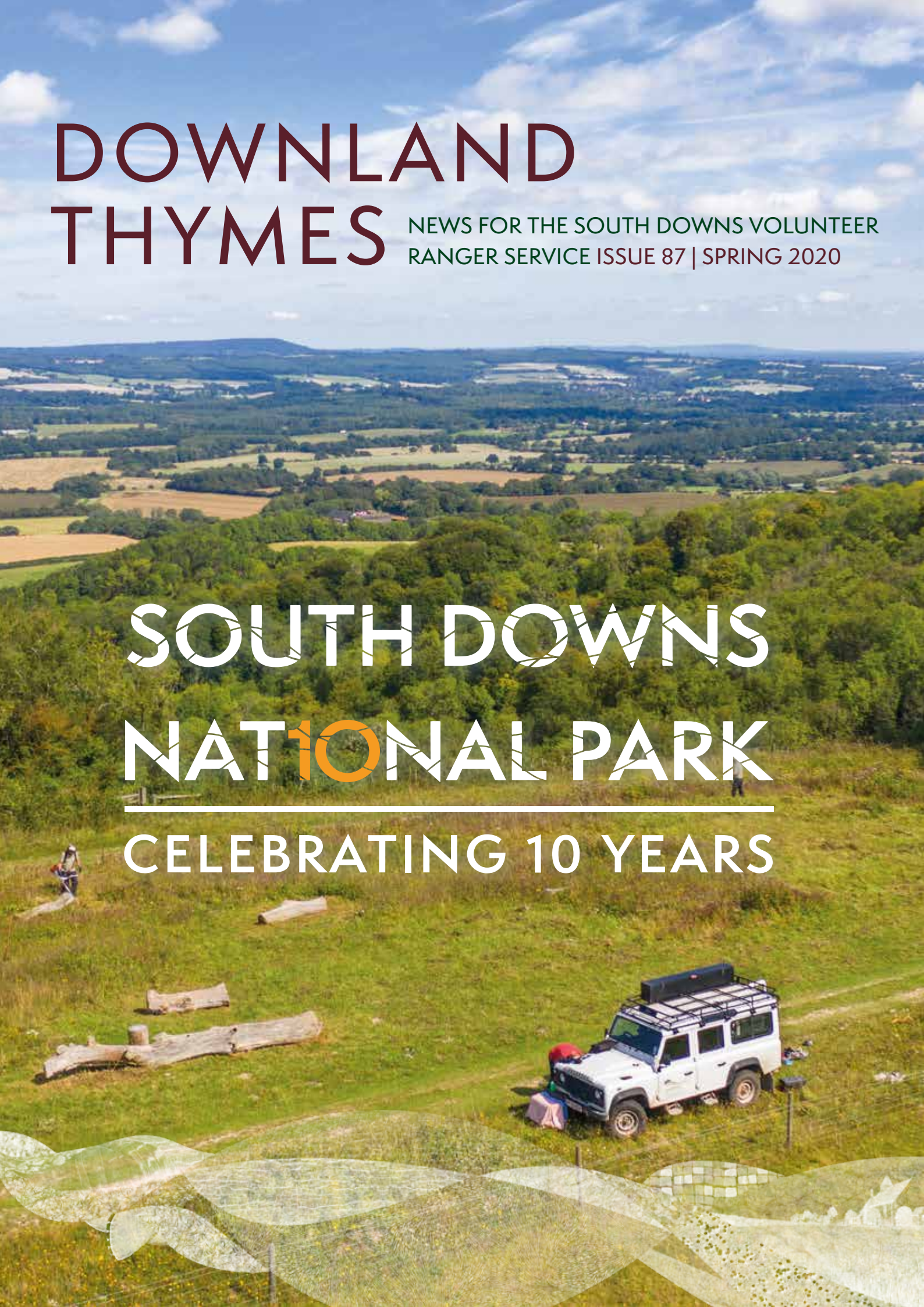
# DOWNLAND THYMES

NEWS FOR THE SOUTH DOWNS VOLUNTEER  
RANGER SERVICE ISSUE 87 | SPRING 2020

## SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK

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### CELEBRATING 10 YEARS







CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

This is my last Chair's Corner piece as you will be electing a new Chair at the AGM on Saturday 28 March, I hope as many of you as possible come along to what promises to be an excellent day in Lewes. It provides a wonderful opportunity for us to meet up with volunteers from other areas of the Park and to swap ideas while also keeping us informed on important Authority business. I am especially looking forward to the presentation that day by butterfly expert Neil Hulme on the Knepp Estate project of re-wilding.

As I look back on my time working on your behalf with the VRS Committee, now for over 10 years, I am grateful for the opportunity that the AGM brings for us to mix together as volunteers from such varied backgrounds and for us to be updated by senior SDNPA officers. It really has been a privilege for me to have been your Committee Chair, a role I have held for five years, during which time I have greatly valued the staff at SDNPA HQ who are so supportive of our efforts and who work so diligently behind the scenes to ensure that the Ranger teams, who we as volunteers see regularly, are looking after this wonderful landscape so very well. I know that my successor will be supported very well by the staff and of course yourselves as we get ready to celebrate the 10th Anniversary of the National Park on March 31, but let's also not forget that the South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service itself will celebrate its 40th anniversary next year – that really is quite an achievement.

RON WILDER, VRS CHAIR

UPDATE FROM THE VOLUNTEERING TEAM



Wilmington Hill task day  
© SDNPA/Daniel Greenwood

IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR WHEN THE RESULTS ARE IN AND WE CAN GET A SENSE OF THE IMPACT YOU HAVE HAD OUT IN THE SOUTH DOWNS IN THE PAST YEAR. IN 2019, 300 VOLUNTEERS GAVE THEIR TIME IN SUPPORT OF THE NATIONAL PARK, CONTRIBUTING A WHOPPING 27,000 HOURS OF YOUR TIME OVER 4,000 DAYS.

Your support makes a massive impact in protecting and enhancing the National Park. We are very grateful for your time, goodwill and energy for the cause, so thank you for all that you do to support the South Downs.

Moving into 2020 there are a lot of things to look forward to. We are in the process of taking on ownership of Seven Sisters Country Park in the Eastern Downs, with lots of work going on behind the scenes to prepare everything for the opening of the park and the visitor facilities. This is a hugely symbolic place for many people. It's of course the iconic landscape of the Seven Sisters, but also a place that means so much to local people who have been visiting for decades. Many of you have known it all your lives and have a special relationship with it. It's also the most visited part of our National Park and a chance to impress upon a wider audience the impact volunteers have in the South Downs.

Seven Sisters provides a great opportunity to find new ways for people to support the National Park as it will be the first site we own and with new responsibilities. We are keenly aware of the need to keep Seven Sisters Volunteer Ranger Service volunteers informed as best we can, as well as ensuring

new volunteers, many of whom have been doing great things for East Sussex County Council down the years, are able to support the visitor facilities at Exceat.

We're also celebrating 10 years of the South Downs National Park, with a reminiscence piece by outgoing chair of the Volunteer Ranger Service, Ron Wilder, in this issue. We would like to take the opportunity to thank Ron for all his time over the years in helping us to evolve the Volunteer Development Strategy and other policies and projects for the Authority.

Moving on from their role as Treasurer for the VRS committee is Mike Ellis. Mike has played an important role in the development of the Volunteer Conservation Fund which is now delivering measurable benefits in the landscapes of the National Park. Thank you, Mike.

This leads to the perfect opportunity to remind you of the Volunteer Ranger Service AGM on Saturday 28 March at Lewes Railway Lands. It's your chance to vote for the people to take over the roles of Chair and Treasurer, so don't miss out!



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National Park



For those of you who have booked on to woodland bird ID courses this spring, thank you. We were blown away by how quickly the courses booked up. I'm really looking forward to getting out into the woods and seeing what we can find. Keep an eye out for more ecologically-focused courses in the summer. Thank you to Helena Lewis of the VRS committee who has done a huge amount of preparation in making the events a possibility.

We hope you enjoy the spring out on the Downs and look forward to seeing you soon.

DANIEL GREENWOOD  
SDNPA VOLUNTEER  
DEVELOPMENT OFFICER



LET'S CELEBRATE!

THIS YEAR IS VERY SPECIAL FOR THE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK. IT WAS 10 YEARS AGO THAT A VISION BECAME A REALITY.

After years of passionate campaigning, England's newest National Park was born, designating 1600km<sup>2</sup> of special landscape with its breathtaking views, unique heritage and hidden gems for the benefit of the nation. The National Park's special qualities are as important today as they were a decade ago...

- The world-class, inspirational landscape of chalk grassland, white cliffs, heathland and woodland.
- A rich variety of wildlife and habitats including rare and internationally important species. Distinctive towns and villages, and communities with real pride in their area.
- Great opportunities for recreational activities and learning experiences.
- Tranquil and unspoilt places.
- An environment shaped by centuries of farming, embracing new enterprise and providing vital services such as clean water, food and space to breathe.
- A Dark Night Sky with the best view of the stars you'll find anywhere in south-east England.

Inside this edition of *Downland Thymes*, we are continuing this celebration. On pages 4-5 outgoing SDVRS Chair, Ron Wilder's gives his view from a volunteer's perspective on the last 10 years, including images from that period. Page 14 highlights some of the events happening this year to celebrate the 10th anniversary and on page 15 there is a thank you to volunteers from Andrew Lee, the Authority's Director of Countryside Policy and Management.



So... time to get the kettle on and settle down for a good read.

CHARLIE HELLEWELL  
EDITOR, DOWNLAND THYMES

If you would like to contribute stories, reviews, task reports or photographs to a future edition of *Downland Thymes*, then please get in touch. [dt@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:dt@southdowns.gov.uk)  
The deadline for the next edition will be 23 April 2020.





# RON REMEMBERS

AS THE AUTHORITY GETS READY TO CELEBRATE THE 10th ANNIVERSARY OF THE NATIONAL PARK I THOUGHT I WOULD REMINISCE A LITTLE ON THE VRS AND HOW WE HAVE EVOLVED OVER THAT TIME.

## SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK CELEBRATING 10 YEARS



Friston pond



Seed harvester



Gate repairs on the South Downs Way

The VRS was formed in 1981 by Paul Millmore in the East Sussex Heritage Coast Area and subsequently developed through the support of the South Downs Conservation Board, followed by the South Downs Joint Committee (SDJC). In 2010 the SDNPA Interim Chief Executive, Richard Shaw, invited the VRS to become formally affiliated with it as the South Downs Volunteer Rangers Service (SDVRS) and Ian Hartle, the long-standing volunteer co-ordinator of the SDJC, transferred to the Authority. Since those latter days of the SDJC I have been serving on the SDVRS Committee and have contributed to many of the policy developments that have been crafted, such as the Vision, the Special Qualities, the State of the Park Report, the Partnership Management Plan and the Local Plan. It has been an incredibly interesting period to be involved with the Authority as it established itself at the cutting edge of National Park thinking and management.

The SDVRS itself has changed a lot; longer-standing members will remember the five training days to become a volunteer, the SDVRS Committee now provides some of that through the education days we run, meaning now there is only one day of structured training. Whilst scrub bashing and bonfires remain a vital part of our work we have also embraced new initiatives such as:

- shepherd hut restorations
- river restoration and water vole re-introduction
- creating owl box sites
- public engagement
- power tool working including chainsaw and seed harvesting.

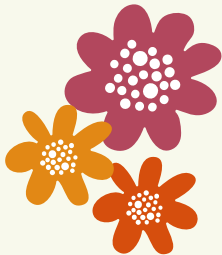
One task I'm pleased I wasn't involved with was the Eastern Area pooh fairies – clearing the site of the Battle of Lewes for the 750th anniversary, a task I hope never to be repeated! We have been very fortunate to have been resourced so very well to take on these new activities with some of the best equipment and training available to any involved in conservation volunteering. We have also diversified. No longer is the SDVRS a body of solely outdoor conservation volunteers, we have oral history, events volunteers, office volunteers, education volunteers, surveyors of too many skills to list, youth ambassadors and most recently we have started to provide much needed resources to Partner organisations through the Volunteer Conservation Fund. In doing all of this I know that so many of us relish the camaraderie that we create, we have great fun and find ourselves in many amusing situations. My own list includes getting landrovers bogged down, mini diggers falling into trenches, cattle giving our vehicles a good wash and unnamed members falling into rivers, pigsties and very muddy ponds!

I firmly believe the future for us is exciting. I am sure that with determination we can all achieve so much more for this wonderful landscape and enhance it for our future generations, there can be no better goal than that.

RON WILDER  
SDVRS CHAIR



Secrets of the High Woods volunteers



River clearing at East Meon



Shepherd's hut restoration



Volunteer Youth Ambassadors – Kirstie and Cameron



One of SDNPA Launch Events including Chair, Margaret Paren



New mower



Youth Action – Litter picking



Mini digger disaster





Fungi ID day with Daniel Greenwood at Stanmer Park  
© Helena Lewis

# FUNGI ID DAY AT STANMER PARK

LAST NOVEMBER, VOLUNTEER DEVELOPMENT OFFICER AND FUNGI EXPERT DANIEL GREENWOOD LED A WOODLAND WALK AND TALK FOR VOLUNTEERS SHOWING US HOW TO IDENTIFY DIFFERENT MUSHROOMS AND FUNGI.

As heavy rain was forecast for 1pm we chose to swap the walk to the morning and the presentation for the afternoon which worked well as the rain started to descend just after we arrived back. We all developed an eye for spotting even the tiniest fungi on dead wood and found that they are easy to photograph as they are colourful and remain still, unlike birds or butterflies.

We all enjoyed coffee and biscuits as well as a chat about the differences between mushrooms, toadstools and fungi.

Thank you Daniel for an interesting and interactive day encouraging us to all take more notice of rotten wood and what it holds both in and on it.

HELENA LEWIS, VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE OFFICER

A huge thanks to all of you who have signed up for the Woodland Bird identification courses in April. These events are now full, but watch out for details of a Chalk Downland training day in June.



Christmas fungi © Daniel Greenwood

## CHRISTMAS FUNGI

The Eastern area's Christmas task took us up the long track to Lullington Heath, a National Nature Reserve and SSSI managed by Natural England. We set to work clearing gorse but several of us had recently been on a Fungi ID course run by Daniel Greenwood, so our eyes were peeled.

Soon **candle snuff** was seen emerging from dead gorse branches. Sharp eyes pointed out an orange growth on a gorse branch – **yellow brain**.

Growing at the base of a mature gorse bush was a brown toadstool – **false chanterelle**; it did indeed look most unappetising.

In patches of grass between the gorse some small white toadstools were spotted – **snowy waxcaps**, very common. At tea break mince pies and other fancies were produced, then someone came forward with a yellow greasy toadstool cap – appropriately named **butter waxcap**.

The order came to stop cutting. As we waited for the fire to die down Daniel spotted something orangey yellow and tiny in the grass. It wasn't a gorse flower petal although there were a few about despite it being just three days from the longest night of the year. This had minute finger branches that closely resembled coral in seas of a warmer clime – **meadow coral**. In all, quite a lot to spark our interest in the world around a gorse patch.

We piled into the land rovers to take us back to the Plough and Harrow in Litlington for our Christmas lunch. Now who had ordered the mushroom soup?

TIM VISICK  
VOLUNTEER RANGER  
EASTERN DOWNS



# A SPECIAL TREAT TWO CHRISTMAS TASKS

THOSE WHO VOLUNTEER DURING THE WEEK AS WELL AS THE WEEKEND ARE LUCKY TO HAVE A SPECIAL TREAT OF TWO 'CHRISTMAS TASK' DAYS TO ATTEND.

I am certainly not the only one but there are not that many of us and so the Eastern Area Rangers organise an event for both groups. And what is a Christmas Task Day? This is a day in December when, as usual, we do a task but at about 12.30pm, we start to put away the tools and get driven down to a local pub for a delicious, two course meal, courtesy of the South Downs National Park Rangers.

The morning task has a special Christmas atmosphere. Cakes and mince pies appear at break-time, Rangers wear their Christmas hats, and everyone is in a relaxed and chatty mood. It's a great opportunity to meet colleagues who volunteer on a different day, or who are based at Stanmer Park and also good to catch up with Daniel Greenwood, our Volunteer Development Officer and Claire Kerr, Countryside and Policy Manager, both getting stuck in with the rest of us.

Actually, much is achieved in the morning with everyone keen to build up an appetite for dinner. For me, there was a surprising bonus of 15 golf balls reclaimed from the gorse as we were next to Lewes Golf Club. But it is the meal in the pub that is the highlight: crackers, party hats, jokes, lovely food which, for me, was washed down with a pint of the local ale.

As appropriate on these occasions, speeches of thanks were given on behalf of us all by Aled Evans at the Sunday event, and Stephen Taylor at the weekday event, to our professional Ranger colleagues for organising both events; and a thunderous round of applause demonstrated our appreciation.

ALAN JONES  
VOLUNTEER RANGER  
EASTERN DOWNS

WEEK DAY TEAM



WEEKEND TEAM



Eastern Downs, Christmas 2019



Eastern Downs, Christmas 2019  
© Daniel Greenwood





# IN PRAISE OF THE INSECT

THEY SAY NEVER JUDGE A BOOK BY ITS COVER BUT EVER SINCE READING DAVE GOULSON'S BOOK *A STING IN THE TALE*, WHICH I BOUGHT BECAUSE ITS COVER ATTRACTED ME, I HAVE BECOME INTERESTED IN INSECTS.

Now a life member of Buglife, the insect charity, I spend lots of time looking for and at 'the small things that run the planet'.

The bulk of all animal life, whether measured by biomass, numerical abundance or numbers of species, consists of invertebrates such as insects, spiders and worms. Many species that were once common are now rare. We may have lost 50% of the numbers of insects in the last 50 years with 41% of insect species threatened with extinction.

So, you may ask, what have insects ever done for us, apart from spoil a good picnic? In fact, 75% of the crop types grown by humans require pollination by insects. Many bird species rely on insects for food. They are efficient pest controllers. Much of our waste matter is disposed of by insects. They brighten our daily lives with extravagant displays of colour. We may, one day soon, rely upon farmed insects as a source of protein.

We all do our bit by bringing the Downs back into a more productive environment for insects but there is more we can do. We could enhance our environment, brighten

our days and save species by making our gardens more insect friendly. Not just with bees but beetles and spiders too. We have a 10 metre square garden and all of the photos which accompany this article were taken there. My wife has planted a lot of the usual pollinator friendly flowers, we have a log pile in one corner and there is a small bee hotel.

I can spend hours watching crab spiders waiting for prey or solitary bees being more sociable. So try to find space to be more insect friendly and find time to investigate that amazing, small world.

TERRY DOYLE, VOLUNTEER RANGER  
WESTERN DOWNS



Lesser stag beetle  
© Terry Doyle

Main image:  
Ichneumon wasp  
on fennel  
© Terry Doyle

Inset: Bee on  
rosemary  
© Terry Doyle



75%

of the crop types grown by humans  
require pollination by insects

50%

of insects have been lost  
in the last 50 years

41%

of insect species are  
threatened with extinction

Reference: *A Sting in the Tale* by Dave Goulson.

## AN EPIPHANY OF WILDFLOWERS IN EAST SUSSEX!



© Liddy Davidson



© Liddy Davidson

AS A SEVEN SISTERS  
VOLUNTEER RANGER I'M  
KEEN TO DO MORE TO  
HELP RESTORE OUR LOCAL  
CHALK DOWNLAND.

Last summer BBC Gardeners' World focused on wildflower gardening which resulted in a personal epiphany... could we do this in our garden?

Our Eastbourne home and garden are hewn into a south facing slope of the South Downs with a steep bank above the house. Luckily this was a positive challenge for me thanks to superb practical support from the Work and Retrain as a Gardener Scheme (WRAGS) at Rymans, near Chichester

Before the birds nested we cleared the bank of hordes of invasive 'thugs', added plants, to give structure and colour throughout the seasons and gradually increased drought tolerant perennials. However, a steep slope is hard work and water usage a concern.

The theory was that a wildflower bank would help more wildlife with less maintenance and watering...

With advice from Colin Reader, a local wildflower consultant well known to SDNPA, this is what we did last autumn...

More to follow later in the year, when hopefully we have enjoyed some fruits of our labour and learnt about managing our new wildflower bank!

LIDDY DAVIDSON  
VOLUNTEER RANGER  
SEVEN SISTERS

### References:

Christopher Lloyd, *Meadows*, Cassell Illustrated 2004; Colin Reader *wildflowerlawnsandmeadows.com*; Pam Lewis, *Making a Wildflower Meadow*, Frances Lincoln Ltd 2003.



## PLANNING FOR WILDFLOWERS



### Assessed the site

A sunny, 52m<sup>2</sup> chalk bank with thin topsoil.

### Prepared the site

Keeping larger shrubs at the top for all year interest and plants along the bottom to help hold back soil, it took two of us four days to lift plants. After carefully spraying remaining weeds with Glyphosate\*, I removed the last weeds, bits of root, corms, old tulip bulbs and stones by hand, then raked the soil to ensure good contact of seed with soil... Phew! This had better be worth it! (\*Colin recommended Glyphosate as the least harmful weed-killer to wildlife and least likely to kill or weaken future seedlings)

### Planted spring bulbs

Inspired by Great Dixter I planted bulbs with narrow leaves for early colour.

### Sowed seed

Autumn sowing helps seeds needing the cold to germinate. Colin supplied his 'luxury chalk mix' of annual and perennial seeds with extra orchids (see reference below) at 1.3-1.5 gms m<sup>2</sup>. We mixed the tiny packet of seeds with sand and tried to sow evenly but only covered ¾ of the bank, so ordered a little more seed fast! Not cheap at £100, but we could rely on the seed's local provenance buying from a reputable supplier.

### Watered

This happened naturally thanks to last autumn's unceasing rain!

### Wait!

We repaired a hole in the fence to stop rabbits and thanks to fellow volunteer ranger Kate, I have added 'Pride of Sussex' (round headed rampion) so we now wait with baited breath to see what might appear in spring!

## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

BISHY BARNEY  
BEES OR GOD  
ALMIGHTY'S COW

Ladybirds are less common than they once were. In Sussex 150 years ago you can tell that this humble insect was much more common from the number of names it was given.

The Rev W. D. Parish in his *Dictionary of the Sussex Dialect*, first published in 1875, lists a Bishop-Barnaby, a ladycow and a fly-golding as alternative titles for this colourful beetle. Some even used the term 'God Almighty's Cow' which, amazingly, came from the Spanish phrase 'Vaca de Dios'!

Children would set the ladybird on their finger and sing

"Bishop Bishop Barnabee,  
Tell me when my wedding shall be;  
If it be tomorrow day,  
Open your wings and fly away."

BEN BRUCE  
VOLUNTEER  
SOUTH DOWNS CENTRE



Ladybird  
© Roger Kiernan



# EARLIEST FLOWERS

"There's a flower  
that shall be mine,  
'tis the little  
Celandine."

William Wordsworth



Snowdrops © Tim Squire

## SNOWDROPS (*GALANTHUS NIVALIS*) ARE SURELY THE EARLIEST OF ALL FLOWERS IN THE CALENDAR YEAR.

This year, I noticed snowdrops in the garden on the 7th January but I have previously seen them out in December. This bulbous plant is native to Europe and the Middle East but probably not to the UK. Gerard's Herbal described it in 1597 but it was not recorded growing in the wild here until the late 18th century, presumably from garden escapees.

The name *Galanthus* comes from Greek meaning 'milk' and *anthos* meaning 'flower', *nivalis* means 'of the snow'. It was given this name by Carl Linnaeus in his *Species Plantarum* published in 1753.

Clumps of bulbs will increase and can be divided and replanted when 'in the green' immediately after flowering. However snowdrops do produce seed if there are early pollinators around such as queen bumblebees and can also spread this way.

Another of our earliest flowers is the lesser celandine (*Ficaria verna*), commonly known as Pilewort and a member of the buttercup family

*Ranunculaceae*. A look at its tuberous roots will tell you how it got that name and explain why the old Doctrine of Signatures recommended it as a medical treatment for piles. However, it's worth noting that if eaten raw the leaves are toxic.

It's a lover of damp woodland paths, stream banks and ditches and can be a rather invasive weed in gardens. The glossy star-shaped yellow flowers open in the sun, the leaves are rounded heart-shaped on long stalks. Vast carpets of them cover the ground on the corner of Friston Forest opposite Friston church and pond and are a truly dazzling sight.

As one of the earliest to flower they provide an important nectar source for pollinators coming out of winter hibernation.

KATE FRANKLAND  
VOLUNTEER RANGER  
EASTERN DOWNS



# TEN YEARS ON AT ALICE HOLT ARBORETUM

BY HAPPY COINCIDENCE, THE ALICE HOLT ARBORETUM RESTORATION PROJECT SHARES ITS 10th ANNIVERSARY WITH THE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AND HAS PLANTED A SIGNATURE TREE TO MARK THE MILESTONE.

Ten years ago, a group of tree enthusiasts from local communities, working under the auspices of the Alice Holt Community Forum, set about restoring an old research arboretum in Alice Holt Forest, located in the far north of the National Park.

Established in the 1950's the Arboretum was planted by scientists at the nearby Research Station in order to provide a collection of tree species from around the world for the purposes of selective breeding and research. In the 1980's the Arboretum fell into neglect, paths degenerated, benches and picnic tables decayed or suffered vandalism and many of the footpaths became flooded. Several of the viewpoints were lost as they became overgrown and labels were lost from trees.

The decline has been successfully reversed over the past ten years by the activities of a group of volunteers licensed by the Forestry Commission to work in the Forest. This group enjoys a close working relationship with the ranger team at the SDNPA Western Downs Area Office. The Arboretum volunteers also submit data to the National Dormouse Monitoring Programme from 70 nest boxes throughout the site.

A major objective in recent years, has been to plant and nurture a range of rare and exotic specimen trees. The team planted their 100th tree in January 2020 and marked the 10th anniversary of the project, by planting a Sweet Gum at the main entrance.

COLIN HALL AND DICK BEALES  
JOINT TEAM LEADERS, ALICE  
HOLT FOREST – ARBORETUM



Edi Little, middle

## OBITUARY EDI LITTLE

THERE ARE PEOPLE YOU MEET,  
WORK WITH OR COLLIDE INTO  
– EDI WAS THE LATTER.

November 2006 amongst Mud and Billhooks he crash landed into our lives, a force field of sarcastic cynical irreverence and became my partner in crime.

Trying to do Ed justice isn't easy as there was so much of him, a huge personality and chief silliness instigator but the other Edi was the gentlest, kind hearted thoughtful soul one could hope to meet.

Chris, his amigo, suffered a stroke a few years ago. Instead of offering sympathy, Ed offered a lifeline to bring Chris back to the South Downs. He investigated ways to help him move forwards and restore a quality to his days.

He has listened to our woes, counselled and consoled us.

On February 6th 2020 following a Pulmonary Embolism, Ed passed away.

Something in the world stopped along with his heart and suddenly everything seemed empty.

Our friend and brother-in-arms against the scrub and hawthorn had left us. The shock we feel is palpable, I don't think any of us at the Eastern Downs team realised the enormous impact he had on our lives. No silly texts, no mindless giggles, no easy chats about nothing in particular. No Edi.

He would be totally blown away by the outpouring of emotion on his behalf as I really don't think he was aware of the difference he made to our lives.

Don't you dare rest in peace Edi, wherever you are, cause a riot. We'll miss you more than you could ever imagine.

NICKI TULETT, VOLUNTEER RANGER,  
EASTERN DOWNS – STANMER PARK



Right: Edi Little seed  
collecting on Mill Hill  
© SDNPA



10th anniversary planting –  
The Arboretum volunteers  
planted a sweet gum  
(*Liquidambar styraciflua*  
'Worplesdon') © R W Beales

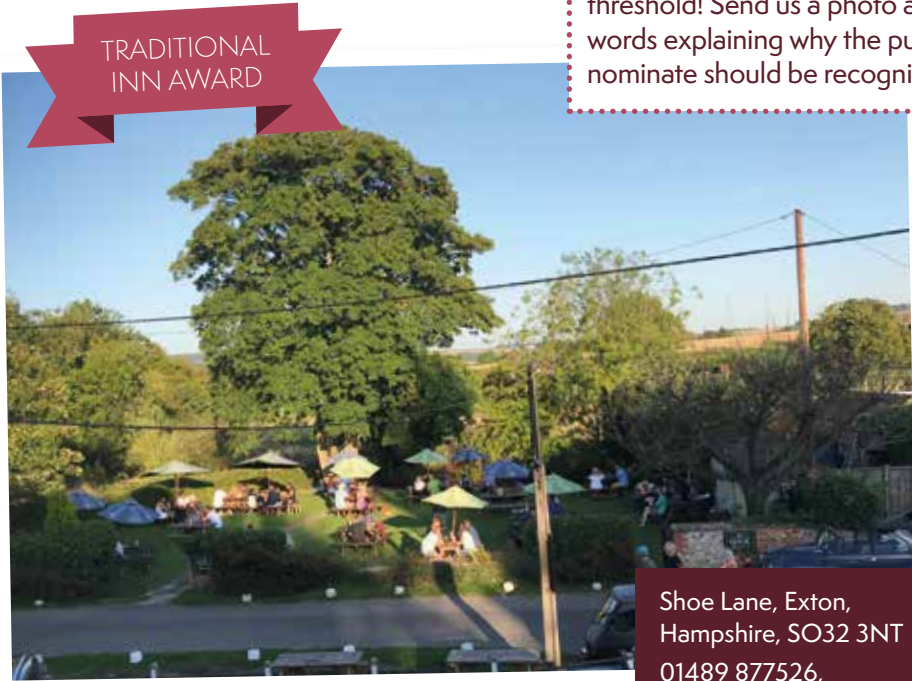


# YOUR REVIEWS

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 Shoe Inn Exton

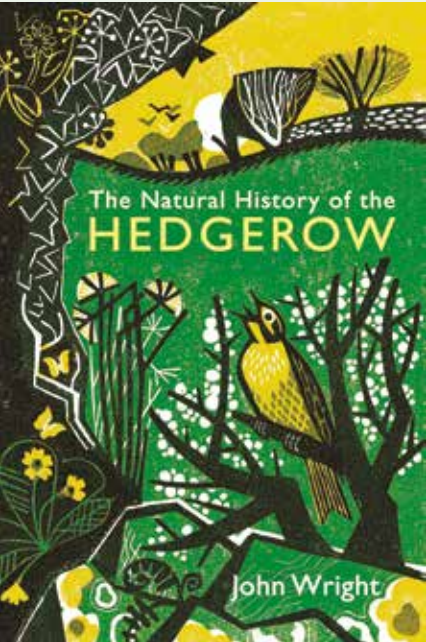
Situated right on the South Downs Way and near to the Meon Valley Trail, this lovely Meon Valley pub is a popular refreshment spot for walkers and cyclists. It has a riverside garden with views up to both Old Winchester Hill and Beacon Hill. The Shoe extends a friendly, relaxed atmosphere for a meal or just a pint. It has its own bakery and offers the local community fresh bread and other Hampshire Pantry goodies as well as a fish and chips take away service. On warm summer weekends look out for the Ice Cream Shack in the garden where they serve their own homemade ice creams. Dogs are welcome.



TRADITIONAL  
INN AWARD

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.

Shoe Lane, Exton,  
Hampshire, SO32 3NT  
01489 877526,  
[theshoexton.co.uk](http://theshoexton.co.uk)



## BOOK REVIEW

*A NATURAL HISTORY OF THE HEDGEROW:  
AND DITCHES, DYKES AND DRY STONE WALLS*

by John Wright

Best known for his foraging books, John Wright has also participated in the River Cottage series of television programs, where he showed people how to find, identify and eat wild fungi, seaweed and plants. Well worth the praise given, I found it easy to read (and my mind is usually so full I have no extra room).

The topics covered includes tree, shrub, flower, moss, algae, micro-organisms, bird and mammal life... and I think it would make a great present or prize!

ANDREW WILLIAMS  
VOLUNTEER RANGER  
WEALDEN HEATH



## POETRY CORNER

### GATED COMMUNITY

Old and rotten soon to be forgotten.  
A bridle gate past its use by date.  
So the thrust of our task with the National Trust.  
  
Is to replace and renew.  
Helps people get through.  
To open and close without a wobbly sticking issue.  
  
Allowing sheep and cattle  
to safely graze and roam.  
In their green field they call home.  
  
Shovels, spades and pry bars.  
Wire cutters, rabbit tampers and loppers.  
Oak posts, the gate with big hinges, latches and catches.  
  
Dig, lever, pry and scrape,  
a big hole to make.  
Heavy, hot and sweaty work too,  
it creates. Phew!!  
  
Pull up the old, line up and level the new.  
Fill in with chalk, flint and earth.  
Tamp down and cover with turf.  
  
Job done ! Gate all lined up and plumb.  
Sitting in the sun.  
Time to celebrate. Cup of tea anyone?

ROGER P. READ  
VOLUNTEER RANGER  
EASTERN DOWNS



Gate replacement job using ash from  
the National Trust near Plumpton.  
© Roger Read

### HAIKU

Daffodils nod their  
swollen heads in breezy joy.  
The wind passes silently.  
  
Green shoots thrust at soil  
to break winters hold. A harsh  
night frost warns too soon.  
  
Mist veils the rising  
sun who shyly hides her face.  
Birds sing merrily.

JOY WETHERED  
VOLUNTEER RANGER  
SEVEN SISTERS

For those unfamiliar with this  
form of poetry a Haiku is a specific  
type of Japanese poem. It has 17  
syllables divided into three lines;  
5, 7 and 5 and typically written  
on the subject of nature.



### DID YOU KNOW?

#### HALNAKER

This little village on the edge of the National Park (usually pronounced 'Hannaker') has had a few names in the past. In 1086 it was recorded as Helneche or Helnache in the Domesday Book. Since then it has gone through a whole load of changes. In 1187 it was called Halnake and by 1428 it was Holnaker. Embarrassing to the residents but in 1628 it was known as Halfnaked or Halfnaket and had been, according to some sources, for about 350 years! They can perhaps be thankful it has arrived at the less shocking Halnaker. But where does the name really derive from? Sources are certain that it comes from the Old English healfanaecer which meant simply 'a strip of ploughed land.'

Ben Bruce, Volunteer South Downs Centre



Halnaker village.  
© Rebecca Saunders



SOUTH DOWNS  
NATIONAL PARK  
CELEBRATING 10 YEARS

WHAT'S ON...

- Rather than one, set piece event, there will be a series of activities over the course of 2020 to celebrate the 10th Anniversary.
- This is imperative if we want to use the events to engage not just existing but new audiences with the National Park in a tangible way – creating that relationship between people and their National Park.
- It is all about celebrating 10 years of the South Downs National Park while also looking to the future.
- '10' will be the theme for all of our events. Some of the main activities and events include:
- 10th Anniversary SDNP calendar
  - Dark Skies Festival
  - Celebratory anniversary dinner
  - 'Discover National Parks' fortnight at 10 urban areas around the outskirts of the Park
  - Launch of our new website
  - Launch of our new Partnership Management Plan (PMP) which will focus on our 10 areas of priority taking us to 2025
  - 'Your National Park' campaign – 10 priority outcomes from the PMP highlighted by 10 custodians of the Park
  - Two celebratory editions of South Downs View
  - A 10th Anniversary 'Way in a Day' event in June.

GET INVOLVED  
VOLUNTEER YOUR HELP

As part of the national 'Discover National Parks' fortnight, our rangers will be touring town centres this Easter holiday with fun-filled family activities including a giant colouring wall, virtual reality experience and woodcraft.

Public will be invited to drop by and have a go and find out what else there is to do in the National Park over the school break. All the events are **FREE**, will run from 11:00 to 15:00 and no prior booking is required. Locations for April 2020 are as follows:



DISCOVER NATIONAL PARKS  
RANGER ROADSHOW  
6 – 17 APRIL 2020

Mon 6 April	Tues 7 April	Wed 8 April	Thurs 9 April	GOOD FRIDAY
South St Square, Worthing BN11 3DF	Meridian Shopping Centre, Havant PO9 1UN	London Rd, Bognor Regis PO21 1QU	West Wittering Beach Car Park, PO20 8AJ	
EASTER MONDAY	Tues 14 April	Wed 15 April	Thurs 16 April	Fri 17 April
	Hogmoor Inclosure, Bordon GU35 0FJ	Commercial Rd Portsmouth PO1 1BY	The Level Brighton	The Martlets, Shopping Centre, Burgess Hill RH15 9NN
		East St, Shoreham BN43 5ZP	Public Gardens, Alton GU34 1JL	

If you would like to volunteer to help deliver one of these family friendly events, please contact: [eventbookings@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:eventbookings@southdowns.gov.uk)

More info: [southdowns.gov.uk/discovernationalparks](https://southdowns.gov.uk/discovernationalparks)

A THANK YOU TO  
OUR VOLUNTEERS



The list of achievements within the National Park since its designation 10 years ago is impressive. But very few would have been possible without volunteers.

The South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service (SDVRS), already had a distinguished 30 year history starting on the East Sussex downs, gradually extending to cover West Sussex and Hampshire. Their subsequent affiliation to the National Park Authority gave an immediate boost of energy and skills.


Over the last 10 years, each year, around 4,000 working days of VRS time has been given by over 300 people, in rain and shine, on sites from Winchester to Eastbourne.


This effort is not in isolation, we now know that across many other organisations 91,000 volunteer days a year have been given to projects in relation to National Park Purposes, but the SDVRS has been a pioneer and an exemplar to others. Lots of challenges lie ahead – people's lives have changed, and if we are to continue to attract new talent and under-represented groups into volunteering we need to offer additional types of work and be flexible about how, when and where things are done. The SDVRS remains a central pillar of the National Park, and here at the SDNPA we are deeply grateful for what you do.


ANDREW LEE, DIRECTOR OF COUNTRYSIDE POLICY AND MANAGEMENT, SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

SOUTH DOWNS  
NATIONAL PARK  
CELEBRATING 10 YEARS

10. ENGAGING PEOPLE WITH THE NATIONAL PARK THROUGH VOLUNTEERING

 VOLUNTEERING **91,000** volunteering days a year, supported by many different organisations, to conserve and enhance the National Park.

THE SOUTH DOWNS VOLUNTEER RANGER SERVICE 

 AROUND **4,000** DAYS SUPPORTING National Park work a year

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](https://southdowns.gov.uk/newsletter)

**DISCOUNTS FOR VOLUNTEERS**

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

Cotswold Outdoor, Snow & Rock, Gatleys, Runners Need, Clusons, JDSports/Millets/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, and 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/](https://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](mailto:vrs@southdowns.gov.uk) for a replacement.







**Main image:**  
Visiting Butser Hill as part  
of the Artscape Project.  
**Left and right:** Artwork  
inspired by the landscape.

© Amanda Elmes



# ENGAGING NEW AUDIENCES IN THE WESTERN DOWNS

IN 2019 THE WESTERN DOWNS TEAM PUT INTO ACTION A PLAN FOR ENGAGING NEW AUDIENCES WITHIN OUR PATCH OF THE NATIONAL PARK.

This involved developing a style of volunteering that we knew would have different challenges and would focus on the engagement benefits of volunteering. We are not necessarily looking for members of the groups to become long term volunteers but to take away an experience of the South Downs that will enhance their lives as well as gaining a greater understanding of the National Park.

We started at Easter with local engagement, using the Events van at two areas in Bordon and Portsmouth. We found it rewarding to speak to people who were not even aware of National Parks let alone the South Downs and what we can offer.

We then held three day sessions of the National Citizen Service in partnership with Hampshire County Council. The young people (15-17 year olds) sign up for a four week programme to build skills for life through social action project management and volunteering. With partners we got involved to promote the importance of

volunteering and experiencing a National Park and the countryside. This year the young people helped us with site management and ecological surveying at QECP.

There were also two South Downs Youth Action days for 16-25 year olds which we held at Rotherlands, Petersfield and St Catherine's Hill, Winchester. The young people really got stuck into helping us clear Himalayan Balsam and managing scrub on chalk downland. These action days were organised and promoted across the park by the volunteering team, were all well attended and allowed local young people to reduce plastic pollution and help conserve National Park habitats.

During 2019 we were also able to offer three work placements to local school children under 16. We put together a programme for them to gain a variety of experience within the Western Downs. They all enjoyed getting out in the countryside and learning new skills. The general consensus was that it is tiring work but exciting.

We also trialled a new Artscape programme with our Outreach Lead. Working with a local charity for people experiencing social isolation, we had six sessions to connect them to the landscape at Butser Hill (local National Nature Reserve). The group gained an enormous amount from the programme. One of the comments we received was "Thank you so much- I just needed to meet people and get outside the house". Some really inspiring art work was produced, which is now being exhibited at the Merchistoun Hall in Horndean, see images.

The success of these events is evident in the comments received and the work that has been completed. It has been really interesting and occasionally challenging completing the new plan with the new groups but the feedback we have received has made it a really rewarding part of our work. I found it humbling that visiting Butser Hill could be such a major life experience, something many of us take for granted. We are now planning for 2020.

**ELAINA WHITTAKER-SLARK, SDNPA  
LEAD RANGER, WESTERN DOWNS**



**SOUTH DOWNS  
VOLUNTEER  
RANGER SERVICE**

**SOUTH DOWNS  
NATIONAL PARK**

Downland Thymes: News for the  
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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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