

HELP US TO #RENATURE  
SOUTH DOWNS  
NATIONAL PARK

## South Downs News

# WORK AND PLAY IN YOUR NATIONAL PARK

This month:

- **Near, far, wherever you are in the South Downs** Take part in our new photo competition and capture an inspiring view of the National Park...on your camera or mobile phone!
- **Pedal power** As the weather warms up, discover our ideas for a great day-out, from towns to the Downs, on two wheels.
- **Toadally amazing!** Learn about our rangers helping to restore a village pond to increase biodiversity.
- **WIN a family ticket!** Be in with the chance of a day out at a new £4m museum in the National Park.

As always please send your comments and ideas to us at [newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk)

## Win £250 in “Near and Far” photo competition

**Stunning views of landscape, wildlife and cultural heritage are being sought as the National Park’s photography competition returns for 2022 with the exciting theme of “Near and Far”.**

Judges will be looking for breathtaking images that capture close-up views of the National Park, showcasing the beauty of nature in intricate detail.

Photographers are also invited to snap dramatic expansive views of the landscape that show off the size, scale and majesty of the South Downs landscape, whether it be hills, valleys, sky, rivers, woodlands, towns and villages, or historical buildings.

Photographers may be able to combine both “near and far”, but the scope is broad and all entries will be considered on their merits – and the National Park Authority is hoping for some sensational shots of the South Downs!

First place prize is £250, with a runner-up prize of £150, and third prize of £75.



For the first time, the National Park Authority is also introducing a “best mobile photo” category, encouraging people to get snapping on their smartphones for that awe-inspiring view of the National Park and its wildlife. The winner of this category will receive £75.



The youth competition also returns this year for budding young photographers – with categories 10 years and under and 11 to 17. The prize for 10 years and under will be a den-building kit, while the winner of the 11 to 17 category will win a family pass to a Go Ape Treetop Challenge or a Go Ape Forest Segway Experience.

Award-winning photographers Rachael Talibart, Finn Hopson and Carlotta Luke will be on this year’s judging panel.

Carlotta said: “I’m very excited about this year’s theme of near and far. This theme gives so much scope for beautiful images that capture the intimate details and the wide open vistas of the National Park.

“I hope it will inspire people to look both closely and broadly at our inspiring South Downs. I can’t wait to see what the young budding photographers send us in the youth categories.

“I am also really pleased that we now have a mobile phone category. Now there are no excuses not to send in your photos!”

Rachael said: “I am looking forward to seeing lots of wonderful photos from this very special part of the world.

“I hope people will take the opportunity to show us not only the big vistas but also the little details that together make the National Park such a rewarding place to visit or live.’

Entries close at midnight on Monday 31 October. Find out more and download the entry form at

[www.southdowns.gov.uk/care-for/photocompetition2022](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/care-for/photocompetition2022)

Here are some previous winners to get you inspired!



Taking It In, by Andy Flowerday



Winter Runner, by Richard Murray



Pony Heaven, by Joe James

## Inspired by Seven Sisters



**Alinah Azadeh, Writer in Residence for Seven Sisters Country Park, recently hosted a writers' retreat at the breathtaking site and gives an update.**

Last month I held the fourth We See You Now creative retreat, produced through **Writing Our Legacy** as producer, aimed at bringing writers of diverse, global heritage from the South East into the Seven Sisters Country Park and Sussex Heritage Coast area, fostering creative solidarity, through walking, writing and sharing.

A keystone to my residency, it was, as ever, pure joy explore together the natural and cultural heritage of the sublime Seven Sisters Country Park and also out to East Dean and over to Birling Gap.

We had extraordinary luck with warm, bright weather, sandwiched in between rain and storms of the previous and following week!. I had sent out reading materials and provided creative writing prompts which we used to draft new poetry, fiction, landscape-inspired memoir and non-fiction. Among our cohort is Razia Aziz, who you can also meet on a walk through Cuckmere, by listening into my most recent **Colour of Chalk podcast episode**

Next week we will be bringing together many of our fellow writers for an Editorial and Creative Masterclass long weekend with renowned novelist **Leone Ross**, with activity across the country park, Alfriston, Crowlink and East Dean. From this autumn, you will be able to hear some of the completed work completed – as well as use a selection of our writing prompts – to take your own writing and walking journey from the country park.



Before that, I will be running a number of free, public walking and writing events in July. You can already book on to one of them **here**, on 17 July as part of Festival of the Garden at Charleston.

I will also be walking in solidarity with - and bringing a creative writing activity to - this year's annual Freedom From Torture South Downs fundraiser walk on 10 July, **link and info here**, starting out from the country park's Visitor Centre. Please join us, writer or not!

Read more about my residency and the project **here**.

## Pond restoration is toadally amazing!



**Rangers have supported a community to help toad populations recover.**

The Western Downs Ranger team have worked with residents in Newton Valence, Hampshire, to help make the village's waters more appealing to common toads.

It comes after a report from Hampshire and Isle of Wight Trust's Arcadian Consulting, which found that the main breeding pond was in a degraded state.

Nationally, common toads have declined by almost 70 per cent over the past 30 years and loss of pond habitat is a major cause.

In response to the report, Newton Valence Toad patrol and the pond committee swung into action and produced a pond rescue package.

Stephen Robertson, of the Newton Valence Pond Committee, Assistant Ranger Michaela Hawkins and the South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service volunteers, spent the day armed with shovels in the water, surrounded by a cloud of happy tadpoles.

Under Michaela's guidance, new plants were planted in and around the pond to protect and enhance its biodiversity, helping toads and other important species such as damselflies.

A special ceremony took place to mark the end of the work, accompanied by "pond cake" and tea.

National Park Ranger Laura Tong said: "Ponds support an incredible two-thirds of all freshwater species and are key to the survival of toads, frogs, and newts, together with a huge range of aquatic invertebrates and plants.

"Common toads are a signature species and vital for pond health, so we hope that the toads flourishing will also help other animals thrive. This has been a very rewarding nature recovery project and a big thanks to all the helpers and volunteers from the village."



The project was supported by the National Park's Sustainable Communities Fund and the Ranger Grassroots Fund. To find out more about funding visit [www.southdownstrust.org.uk](http://www.southdownstrust.org.uk)

## South Downs quilt marks group's 40th birthday



**The fantastic walking opportunities offered by the South Downs National Park, with its sweeping meadows and rolling downland, have inspired an award-winning design for a quilt.**

U3a is a charity that enables members to learn new things, laugh with friends and live life to the full, for people who are no longer in full-time employment or caring for children.

The movement is in its 40th year and to celebrate, a competition was held to design 40 blocks to create a magnificent quilt on the theme of positive active ageing. It had to incorporate collaboration and be a permanent record of the skills of members.

The quilt block created by Liphook u3a Walkers Group was one of the winning entries and showcases the South Downs where they often walk.

Anne Butler, from the group, said: "We always are inspired by the stunning panoramic views to the sea or across the weald.

"We have taken inspiration from one of our many photos to develop a landscape quilt, capturing the rolling downland and sweeping meadows.

"As Virginia Woolf said of the South Downs, we are 'overcome by beauty more extravagantly than one could expect'.

"Our walks definitely enable us to step out and to Learn, Laugh and Live – the u3a motto."

The large quilt was stitched together by a professional quilter and then sent frozen, in order to kill any bugs, at the Whitworth Gallery, in Manchester.

The grand unveiling will take place at the gallery on 17 June before going on display at The Blanket Hall, Witney, Oxfordshire.



To find your nearest u3a, visit [www.u3a.org.uk](http://www.u3a.org.uk)

# Use your pedal power to explore the South Downs!



**There's nothing quite like the freedom of a cycle ride through the countryside, the warm breeze on your face and breathtaking views to admire.**

Whether you're looking for a gentle bike ride with the family, or looking to use some serious pedal power to do some off-road mountain biking, the South Downs National Park is full of wonderful opportunities for cycling, especially as we look forward to the summer months.

One of our ongoing priorities is to help connect urban areas to the National Park, allowing people to cycle up into the South Downs and enjoy the views and wildlife. It's hard not to be invigorated by a bike ride surrounded by this lush green landscape and the soothing chorus of birdsong!

If you've never cycled into the National Park before, here are three cycle routes that offer a great day-out:

## **Centurion Way ride, West Sussex**



You can catch the train to Chichester and be in the heart of the National Park within half an hour or so.

The Centurion Way is a 5.5 mile (9km) path that runs between

Chichester, Lavant and West Dean following the old Chichester to Midhurst railway line.

If cycling from further afield, it also connects with the South Coast Cycle Route at Fishbourne.

The route finishes in the beautiful downland village of West Dean, which has a village store and tearooms, church, pub and the 6,400-acre West Dean Estate. The estate is made up of both arable and pastoral farmland and many of the pretty cottages are Grade II listed.

The stunning West Dean Gardens are definitely worth a visit, offering a gentle walk with a wide range of historic features to enjoy, including the restored walled garden.

Find out more in our Centurion Way leaflet [here](#).

## **Rowlands Castle ride, Hampshire**

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The village has a railway station on the main London to Portsmouth line, so is a great stepping stone into the National Park.



This is a lovely circular cycle ride along country lanes, offering some fantastic views of the South Downs. The highlight for most will probably be the charming St Huberts, also known as "The Little Church in a Field". This chapel contains some of the oldest wall paintings in southern England, dated c.1330, and the only known one of St Hubert. It's also the site of a deserted medieval village. Make sure you have your camera ready as the scenery, particularly on a sunny day, is truly amazing!

There is also some excellent open access chalk grassland at Chalton Down. All the pedalling is bound to work up a sweat and thankfully there are two fantastic watering holes on the ride at Finchdean and Chalton to quench your thirst or enjoy a spot of lunch!

Find out more about the Rowlands Castle ride [here](#).

## **Peacehaven ride, East Sussex**



This is a gentle ride that will take you from the hustle and bustle of the coast into tranquil downland, taking in valleys, the River Ouse, and the famous 5000-year-old South Downs Way.

The route also includes part of the Egrets Way, which is a new route for cyclists and walkers connecting Lewes to Newhaven. Around half of the planned network has been built and is in use, with sections of pathway running between Lewes and Kingston, Southease and Rodmell, and Southease and Piddinghoe. A lovely way to see the River Ouse valley and a great connection at Southease railway station!

Find out more about the Peacehaven ride [here](#).

If you're feeling a little more adventurous and energetic check out this [mountain bike guide](#) to the South Downs Way. Did you know the 100-mile route is the only UK's National Trail that is fully traversable by bike?

If you don't own a bike why not hire one? There are lots cycle hire companies across the National Park with a range of bikes available to get all ages back in the saddle and exploring the South Downs. Find out more [here](#).

Enjoy your ride!



## The Wickerman returns after two-year absence



Summer was welcomed in spectacular style at Butser Ancient Farm, just south of Petersfield, at their annual Beltain Festival, back with a bang after two years of absence.

As a revival of an ancient Celtic celebration to celebrate the start of summer, the festival saw over 2,500 people gather to eat, drink and make merry with re-enactments, ancient crafts, live music and workshops, before witnessing the burning of the 35ft Wickerman at dusk.

There was a fantastic festival atmosphere at the event with axe-throwing, warrior training, Saxon fighting, sea shanty singing and Morris dancing to name just a few of the activities on offer.

The Wickerman, constructed by a team of woodsmen, volunteers and artists since February, had an Iron Age Warrior theme on honour of the 50th anniversary of Butser Ancient Farm, which started in 1972 as a research site exploring Iron Age life and farming through experimental archaeology.

Since then it has expanded to cover Stone Age, Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman and Anglo-Saxon life but is perhaps most famous for its Iron Age roundhouses and the contribution that the site has made to the understanding of Iron Age life.

The design changes each year and is kept a top secret until the day of the festival, but this year's figure certainly didn't disappoint! Throughout the event the figure is adorned by the wishes of festival goers, tied to the wicker frame, which are sent out into the world as the Wickerman burns, a beacon beckoning the sun's warmth for the year ahead.



Beltain is the biggest fundraising event of the year for Butser Ancient Farm. The event will support many more projects and educational activities at the farm in the coming year as

they recover from the Covid pandemic.

For more information about Butser Ancient Farm and their upcoming events, workshops and projects for their 50th anniversary year head to [www.butserancientfarm.co.uk](http://www.butserancientfarm.co.uk)

## “This is music for people who love the earth”



Last year award-winning composer Ed Hughes and film-maker Sam Moore were commissioned by the Authority to create a special five-minute film to celebrate the National Park's 10th anniversary.

Now the film will receive a special screening at the Attenborough Centre for Creative Arts, at the University of Sussex, in Brighton, on Monday 20 June at 6pm.

This event is also the launch of Ed's new project, the “South Downs Songbook”. This Arts Council England funded project is touring Sussex schools, colleges and universities between 20 and 30 June. Four composers, Shirley J Thompson, Rowland Sutherland, Evelyn Ficarra and Ed Hughes have been commissioned to each write a new song inspired by walking the South Downs. Each composer has chosen a text, and each text gives a very different perspective on landscape and history. Shirley Thompson has chosen An Hymn to the Evening by Phillis Wheatley (1753-1784), an African-American author. Rowland Sutherland has set a poem by Charlotte Turner Smith (1749-1806). Ed Hughes has adapted words by an early contributor to the Mass Observation Archive (Marion Robinson, 1937) who lived near Felpham and was inspired by William Blake and the skies over the South Downs. Evelyn Ficarra has set a poem by contemporary Brighton poet, Valerie Whittington.

The songs will be premiered by the region's Orchestra of Sound and Light at the June event.

The project is also creating a digital education resource pack to inspire young people to compose in response to the South Downs. The pack will include interviews with the commissioned composers about their work, tips on how to get started with composing, and a bespoke library of sampled sounds from the South Downs. To register for this free pack please click [here](#)

Simultaneously, Ed's new CD of compositions, 'Music for the South Downs', is released in June on Metier records. Composer Judith Weir writes about this new release, 'the works in this rich collection ...surge forward with textural warmth and harmonic continuity. This is music for walkers and people who love the earth.' Music for the South Downs can be ordered [here](#):

Free Tickets for the Orchestra of Sound and Light in Brighton can be ordered [here](#)

## Be “tick aware” when out and about in the Downs



As tick season begins, people are being encouraged to become “tick aware” and take some simple precautions.

Lyme disease is an infection that can be passed to people when they are bitten by an infected tick. People are most likely to encounter ticks when doing activities in the countryside or other green spaces such as woodland. Studies estimate that 1 to 5% of tick bites can lead to Lyme disease.

Symptoms include a spreading circular red rash, which may appear as a bulls-eye rash, as well as non-specific flu-like symptoms. Although a lot of people associate the disease with the rash, a third of people bitten don't report seeing one.

Allison Thorpe, who leads access and recreation in the National Park, has some simple tips for people:

- While walking in green spaces, consider wearing clothing that covers your skin to make it more difficult for ticks to access a suitable place to bite.
- Consider wearing light coloured clothing so that you can easily spot ticks and brush them off.
- After spending time outside, check yourself, your clothing, your pets and others for ticks.
- Remove any attached tick as soon as you find it using a tick-removal tool or fine-tipped tweezers.

Allison added: “We should all take five minutes to familiarise ourselves with the basics around tick prevention – dress appropriately – tucking trousers into socks can be helpful, check yourself, children and dogs for ticks after a walk, know how to remove a tick if you have been bitten and be aware of the signs and symptoms of Lyme Disease.”

If you have developed symptoms after being bitten by a tick or spending time outdoors, immediately contact your GP or call NHS 111, mentioning where you have been and if you remember being bitten.



## Win a family day-out at new £4m museum!



Situated at the foot of the South Downs, Petersfield Museum looks to tell the story of Petersfield and the surrounding areas through a wonderfully diverse mix of archaeology, art, historic dress, literature, photography, poetry and social history.

Only ten short months since **Petersfield Museum** re-opened from a £4 million-pound National Lottery Heritage Fund supported project, there is a wide range of outstanding temporary exhibitions, exciting events and engaging displays for all to enjoy.

Its brand-new temporary exhibition, ‘Science Fiction: The area that inspired a genre’, which opened on 4 May, explores how Petersfield and the surrounding areas influenced the lives and works of science fiction icons: Sir Alec Guinness, H G Wells and John Wyndham.

The museum is also hosting a fantastic theatre performance in June, entitled ‘Two Halves of Guinness’, which takes an entertaining and insightful tour of the life and times of Sir Alec Guinness, from his first meeting with Sir John Gielgud to far away galaxies in Star Wars.

‘Paula Rego: Literary Inspirations’, a thought-provoking temporary exhibition on Rego’s work in print, which runs until 9 July, displays Paula Rego’s graphic work alongside the stories that inspired her in artists’ books published by Enitharmon Editions.’

Petersfield was founded in the early 12th century and the town’s name is derived from “St Peter’s feld”. The word feld meant any open area without trees and a church dedicated to St Peter was built on a feld.

We’ve teamed up with the museum to offer a family ticket (two adults, two children).

People signing up to the newsletter during May will be automatically entered into the draw.

Those who are already signed up can email “St Peter’s feld” to [newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk) before midnight on 31 May.

Sign up to the newsletter [here](#) and see competition T&Cs [here](#).



## Things to do in the South Downs this May

Please follow the links as booking may be necessary. Find these and more events across the National Park and submit your own events at [southdowns.gov.uk/events/](https://southdowns.gov.uk/events/)



- Once again the residents of Lewes will gather on the town's cobbled streets to commemorate the anniversary of the Battle of Lewes, one of the most decisive battles of the 13th Century. Enjoy the **free event** on 14 and 15 May incorporating the Battle of Lewes re-enactment, medieval traders, historical displays and demonstrations.
- Reconnect with the natural world at Gilbert White's House and Gardens' annual **Nature Day**, in Selborne, on 15 May. The venue is hosting a range of interactive family activities throughout the day and there will be an eco-fair where you can purchase sustainable products and crafts for your home.
- Enjoy a **coastal walk** on 22 May from the Birling Gap Visitor Centre to learn about the history of this amazing coastline.
- It's that time of year where our heathland comes to life at dusk with the mysterious sound of the Nightjar 'churring'. Book on to our **free guided nightjar walks** in the Wealden Heath Special Protection Area in East Hampshire.
- Looking ahead to June, **Open Farm Sunday** returns to the Goodwood Estate, near Chichester, on 12 June. Visitors will be able to learn about the importance of sustainability and animal welfare at Home Farm, taste milk from Shorthorn dairy cattle and take part in wood and woodland crafts.

## 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? Or would you like to pen your own article about why you love the South Downs? Please let us know!



To submit a comment for our newsletter please email [newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk). For a fast and direct response to your questions please email [info@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:info@southdowns.gov.uk)

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