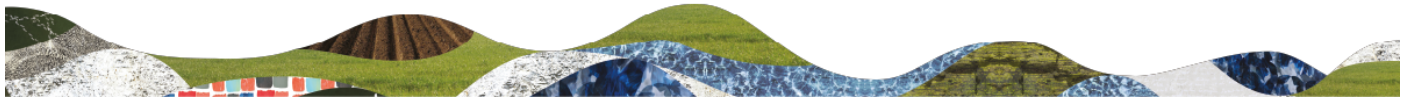


SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK

CELEBRATING 10 YEARS

SOUTH DOWNS NEWS



WORK AND PLAY IN YOUR NATIONAL PARK

This month:

- **Giving nature a helping hand** Find out about plans to create a connected network of "green infrastructure" across the region to create a better natural environment for people and wildlife.
- **Have you ever babysat a sand lizard?** Discover more about our action-packed Secrets of the Heath virtual event, including the chance to see rare lizard hatchlings!
- **Celebrating 10 years** Learn more about a writer whose life became inextricably linked to the Downs.
- **The wonders of Hampshire** Find out 10 curious facts about this remarkable and beautiful county.

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

Major plan launched for nature recovery across South East

An ambitious vision to help boost nature and drive a green economic recovery has been unveiled by the South Downs National Park Authority and partners.

The bold strategy, covering the South East region, aims to create a connected network of "green infrastructure" that makes havens for wildlife, supports local economies, helps to mitigate climate change and gives local people all the health and well-being benefits of a better natural environment.

Twelve areas across the region – primarily on the edge or beyond the National Park's boundaries – have been identified as key areas for long-term investment in more green infrastructure. The term "green infrastructure" embraces the network of natural and semi-natural features, spaces and water courses that can be managed to deliver wide-ranging benefits for people and wildlife. It can include parks, gardens, rivers and streams, roadside verges, street trees, hedgerows, churchyards, allotments and nature reserves as well as wider green spaces.

The detailed masterplan, called The People and Nature Network (PANN), has been produced in partnership with a range of organisations, including dozens of local authorities across Hampshire and Sussex, the RSPB,



Wildlife Trusts, The Woodland Trust, English Heritage and the Environment Agency.

Andrew Lee, Director of Countryside Policy and Management for the South Downs National Park Authority, explained: "The ethos behind this ambitious strategy is that nature is working invisibly, every day, to keep our environment healthy for both wildlife and people. Nature provides us with clean water, fresh air, food to eat, and tranquil places to enjoy with our families. Yet we can never take it for granted as our natural environment is sadly under threat from climate change and global biodiversity decline, together with the fact that we're living in one of the most crowded parts of the UK.

"Nature doesn't recognise administrative boundaries and that's why the People and Nature Network is such a vital piece of work – laying out our collective long-term ambition, at both a regional and national level, to promote more green infrastructure. That could be

Secrets of the Heath returns with sizzling line- up of free family fun!



A live wildlife cam of baby sand lizards, the grand unveiling of a new arts trail, and interactive sessions with rangers will be among the highlights of a fun action-packed weekend to celebrate the amazing heathlands of the South Downs.

"Secrets of the Heath" returns for 2020 with a virtual event with something for all ages and interests.

The bumper line-up over the weekend of 5 and 6 September includes a chance to watch one of Britain's rarest native reptiles – the beautiful and mysterious sand lizard – as babies that hatched last month have their feeding times and gulp down little critters!

Over the weekend people will be able to watch virtual tours of heathlands – known for their radiant purple and pink heathers that blossom in the late summer and their abundance of rare wildlife. Storytelling sessions, live Q&A sessions with reptile experts, live arts classes, and a fun video revealing how to dress like a Saxon warrior will be among the other highlights (*see full programme attached*)

To kickstart the fun weekend, there will be the unveiling of a new educational trail that tells the story of the history, wildlife and people of heathlands. Inspired by stories from local communities and drawing upon sources as diverse as the poet Tennyson and a 395-year-old local map, award-winning sculptor Graeme Mitcheson has created seven bespoke stone carvings for the new Heathlands Sculpture Trail.

There will be a whistlestop tour of all the new sculptures on Friday, 4 September in a series of short Facebook Lives.

The virtual "Secrets of the Heath" builds on the success of the popular event that was held at Petersfield Heath for the past six years.

Katy Sherman, Events and Engagement Officer for Heathlands Reunited, said: "Secrets of the Heath is always one of the highlights of the calendar year for the National Park as it's so much fun and people get really

creating a wildflower meadow in an urban area, improving the greenery along a canal, laying a hedgerow or planting more street trees.

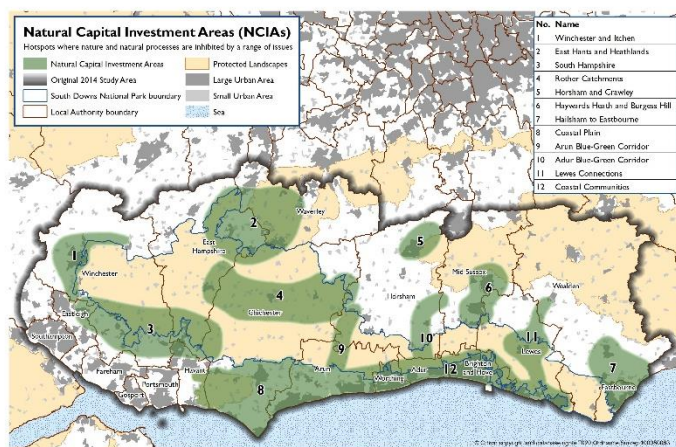
"Every bit of this interconnected green network plays its part in supporting wildlife and also our communities, whether that be through boosting the tourism economy or just being an uplifting space for people to enjoy the natural world. We have this amazing natural space in the National Park, but its benefits don't stop at the designation boundary. This plan aims to make space for nature in urban as well as rural environments and create links with the National Park which already has over 1,000 nature conservation areas."

PANN ties in with the Government's 25-year Environment Plan, which sets out a number of targets, including clean air and water, thriving plants and wildlife, and adapting to climate change. PANN also recognises that creating a healthier natural environment will bring economic benefits for the region, including reducing financial burden on health and social care, increasing visitor spending and increased desirability as a location for business. The partnership will work towards its goals through a number of avenues, including encouraging green infrastructure in emerging planning policy, seeking more local and national funding and developing more community projects that help the environment.

Ian Phillips, Chair of the South Downs National Park Authority, said: "This bold plan lays a strong foundation for nature recovery across the South East, recognising that a co-ordinated approach is required in the years ahead.

"The need for action is clear and the South Downs National Park Authority, as a major environmental and planning stakeholder across three counties, has a key role to play in showing leadership. The COVID-19 pandemic has seen people from all areas re-connect with nature, giving many a new appreciation of how just valuable it is to our health and wellbeing. Now is the time to make the most of this renewed enthusiasm and start creating a better future for both people and nature."

The People and Nature Network report can be read here: <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/national-park-authority/our-work/partnership-management/people-and-nature-network-pann/>



Map showing the 12 key areas (in green) that have been identified as needing more investment in green infrastructure

inspired by the weird and wonderful wildlife of heathlands.



"The COVID-19 pandemic has obviously had an impact on our plans, but we were determined that the 'show must go on'. We've put together an online package of events that we think will appeal to both children and adults alike.

"We hope the event will inspire people to watch to find out more about heaths and how to care for them. A habitat rarer than the rainforest, heathlands are a precious haven for biodiversity, including all 12 of Britain's native reptiles and amphibians.

But they are under threat and would disappear completely without active management. This virtual event is a great opportunity for people to find out how they can play their part in saving our heaths through the Heathlands Reunited project."

The heaths of the South Downs stretch across a 31-mile area from Bordon in the west to Storrington in the east. The Heathlands Reunited project is a partnership of 11 like-minded organisations, led by the South Downs National Park Authority, working to protect the heaths for future generations and increase their connectivity as they have become increasingly fragmented over the centuries.

The Heathlands Reunited team have been working with the RSPB, National Trust, Hampshire County Council and Sussex Wildlife Trust on the new trail to help link up heaths at Wiggonholt, Stedham Common, Lavington Plantation, Shortheath Common, Graffham Common, Black Down and Woolbeding.

The sculpture trail is accompanied by a downloadable leaflet that families and walkers will be able to use to navigate the walks.

For more information on the event, visit www.southdowns.gov.uk

The event is able to run thanks to a generous National Lottery Heritage Fund Grant.



SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Children's amazing artistry culminates in special postcards



Colourful postcards featuring artwork from young artists have been unveiled to mark the 10th birthday of the South Downs National Park.

Earlier this year the National Park teamed up with music, art and drama festival MADhurst to organise a children's wildlife art competition.

Scores of children from across the South East took part – many of whom were staying at home during the lockdown.

The winner in the under-5 category is Harry Whitbread with his barn owl artwork, while the 6-8 category has been won by Rufus Robertson with his depiction of a sand lizard. Winning the 9-11 group is Beatrix Cuss with her artistry of a red kite.

Rufus, from South Harting, said: "I feel excited to win. It's been tough not being at school so it's come at a good time. I love drawing and being outdoors in the Downs, especially on my bike.

Beatrix, from Petersfield, said: "I was very happy and excited when I found out that I had won. I love nature and going for walks, especially when I see dogs!"

Harry's mum, Charlotte von Bulow Quirk, of Sevenoaks, Kent, added: "Harry is so excited to have won first prize. He absolutely loves animals and nature and spends hours observing and drawing everything he sees. He's fascinated by how everything has its place in nature and how all the animals co-exist and have their role to play, such as bees pollinating plants."

The runners-up are Frederick Mileman in the under-5s with his otter artwork, Archie Holloway in the 6-8 category with his toad design, and Isaac Gomes with his depiction of a barn owl.

Zara Kelleway, who works for the National Park, said: "We've been so impressed by the standard of the artwork and it's been lovely to see so many youngsters inspired by the beautiful wildlife on our doorstep."

The postcards will be available from the South Downs Centre in Midhurst. Any profit from sales of the postcards will be donated to the South Downs National Park Trust, the official charity of the National Park.

Last two days of survey on Seven Sisters Country Park



People are being invited to take part in a survey that will help shape planned improvements to the facilities at Exceat in Seven Sisters Country Park.

The National Park Authority is the preferred bidder to take over the management of the country park from East Sussex County Council and a final decision is expected to be made by Government in the coming months.

Our focus is to make it a much better experience both for those visiting and for the landscape and the wildlife that call this special place home. Among the proposed improvements at Exceat will be much-improved toilet facilities and enhanced interpretation for visitors so that they can better understand and enjoy the site.

Kat Beer, Sustainable Tourism Officer, explained: "Don't worry if you have never been before, we're seeking views of people who might go, as well as those who have visited before."

The survey has been open since 5 August and we've had over 600 responses. The survey will close at midnight on Sunday, 16 August.

To take part visit:

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/SSCPAUG20>

Communities invited to take part in survey

As part of its commitment to take action on climate change, the South Downs National Park Authority has teamed up with Community Energy South to provide support for the development of community-led energy groups and projects throughout the National Park.

Together we are providing support to establish new community-energy groups and help these groups get up and running so that communities can benefit from locally-owned renewable energy, while helping to reduce the National Park's carbon emissions.

Organisations, businesses, parish councils and individuals are invited to take part in a survey, which will help support the work.

The survey takes no more than 10 minutes to complete. Visit

www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/southdownsenergy

"Wild Coast Sussex" gets big boost from lottery



An exciting initiative to inspire communities to care for the marine environment has received over half a million pounds of lottery support.

Sussex Wildlife Trust has been awarded a grant of £528,600 by The National Lottery Heritage Fund for its Wild Coast Sussex Project.

The project area includes the iconic Sussex Heritage Coast, which is part of the National Park and stretches from Eastbourne to Seaford.

Nikki Hills, Wild Coast Sussex Project Manager at Sussex Wildlife Trust: "Our partnership champions the rare and precious marine wildlife found locally, highlighting the extraordinary underwater kelp forests, seahorses and rays once abundant in Sussex which could recover and thrive if local communities know about them, understand the threats and support their conservation.

"The project aims to inspire and connect people to the Sussex coast and sea and engage those people by direct action to protect it. It will enable learning and activities to encourage positive lifestyle choices and behaviour change which in turn will reduce negative impacts on the Sussex coast and sea by empowering people to share experience and influence others.

"We will work with primary schools, young people and commercial fishermen, as well as the wider community and general public and take them on a journey to make a positive difference to the crisis in the health of the sea."

Project activities will include a Wild Beach education programme for children, onsite and digital interpretation, a programme of citizen science surveys, fun new coastal activities and social events including beach cleans.

Claire Kerr, who oversees the Sussex Heritage Coast partnership for the National Park, said: "This is an inspiring project that will really complement wider work on the Sussex Heritage Coast."

Sussex Wildlife Trust is the lead partner on the project with Marine Conservation Society, Sussex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority and Brighton SEA LIFE.

The story of Eleanor Farjeon



As the National Park marks its 10th anniversary, Dr Heloise Coffey remembers a writer whose life became inextricably linked to this unique area of the British countryside.

If the children's writer and poet Eleanor Farjeon were alive today, there is little doubt that she would be celebrating the anniversary of the South Downs becoming a National Park. Farjeon is probably best known for having written the words for the hymn 'Morning Has Broken'. She is believed to have been inspired by a beautiful morning in Alfriston, the East Sussex village on the South Downs Way.

Farjeon first developed a love of the South Downs, and of walking, through her friendship with the poet Edward Thomas in the years leading up to the First World War. Thomas lived in Steep in what is now the Hampshire stretch of the National Park.

At different times, Farjeon lived in both West and East Sussex: first in West Sussex in the hamlet of Houghton near Arundel where she rented a thatched property called 'The End Cottage' on Mucky Lane, (since renamed the more salubrious-sounding South Lane). She came here when struggling to come to terms with her grief after Thomas's death on the Western Front in 1917. Later, during the Second World War, she rented a cottage in East Sussex called 'The Hammonds' in Laughton, near Firle.

In 1937, Eleanor Farjeon wrote 'Elise Piddock Skips in Her Sleep' in which the young heroine, Elise Piddock, lives in the village of Glynde at the foot of Mount Caburn, near Lewes. Although set in East Sussex, its main character was inspired by a little girl called Elsie who would skip near Farjeon's home on Mucky Lane in Houghton. The fictitious Elsie Piddock learns to skip at the age of just three, using her father's braces, quickly becoming a remarkable skipper. She is so good that she comes to the attention of the local fairies who, it turns out, also love to skip. They take her under their (tiny) wings, teach her their skipping steps, and give her a skipping rope with fairy powers. Years pass, Elise becomes an old woman, and a rich lord buys the estate on which Mount Caburn sits. He plans to 'shut up footpaths', 'destroy rights of way' and steal the long-held 'common rights' of the locals, including the age-old tradition of skipping up on the hill in a new moon. As if that weren't bad enough, he draws up

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plans to build factories in the place where generations of little girls, like Elsie, had learnt to skip.

The locals are allowed one last night on Mount Caburn. The agreement from his lordship is that, when the skipping stops, the first brick of the first factory will be laid. But he hasn't bargained for Elsie Piddock. Although now an old woman, Elsie starts to skip with the fairy skipping rope and skips and skips and skips. And never stops. In fact, she's probably still skipping there still, saving Mount Caburn and the surrounding countryside.

Eleanor Farjeon's story is more than just a charming modern-day fable – with skipping rhymes evocative of playground games of yesteryear – it is also quietly radical. In her hands, walkers' rights become skippers' right; the right to roam becomes the right to skip. Here was an author who not only wrote about the South Downs, but walked them; lived them. She would set off from her thatched cottage in Houghton and follow paths which now form part of the South Downs Way.

Farjeon would have cut an eccentric figure in the early years of the 20th Century: a woman clutching a shillelagh, a knapsack on her back, smoking a clay pipe and sometimes wearing a Russian peasant-dress made of coarse linen she'd bought at the height of the craze for Russian ballet. She thought of herself as quite a shy and bookish person, lacking in confidence – she once described herself as looking like a 'cheerful suet pudding' – but walking out on the Downs brought her out of herself and boosted her self-belief.

By 1916 she was 'rambling all over Sussex'. Covering many of the chalk paths and byways criss-crossing the South Downs, Farjeon would pick up friends and acquaintances, old and new, along the way.

She would compose poems, stories and songs as she walked. Her rambles inspired the poem 'All the Way to Alfriston' recalling a fifty-mile walk she took, starting from Chichester. It describes the villages, their church bells echoing along 'the running downs'; the abundance of wild flowers. It is a snapshot of the Downs a hundred years ago, brought vividly to life through words. Then came the anthology *A Sussex Alphabet*. First published in 1924, it consists of short poems, one for each letter of the alphabet, celebrating the uniqueness of the South Downs: the rivers (O for Ouse), the birdlife (N for Nightingale), the ancient history (L for the Long Man of Wilmington), and the distinctive geology (F for Flint). Even the South Down sheep, originally bred in Firle, get a mention.

Farjeon's life and writings still have relevance today. There is overwhelming evidence that 'getting out into nature' can boost health, happiness and confidence, a fact amplified by the recent Covid-19 pandemic. Farjeon understood the importance of experiencing the countryside first-hand in order to value it. She knew that if you know the name of, say, a wildflower or a bird or a tree, you are more likely to care about it and to want to safeguard it for future generations.

Dr Heloise Coffey currently lives on the Kent/Sussex border, having lived in East Sussex for many years. A rare first edition of Eleanor Farjeon's "A Sussex Alphabet" was presented to the National Park Authority in 2018 by Dr Peter Robinson, of The Write House, as part of an inspiring project "The South Downs Alphabet", supported by Dr June Goodfield.

Why painting has never been 'Just a Walk in the Park'



A captivating art exhibition begins next month at the Rountree Tryon Galleries in Petworth. Chantelle Rountree, from the gallery, reveals more...

Artist Gordon Rushmer has had a career spanning 55 years, with many high points marking his progress through the twists, turns and 'hard-going' that characterise most creative lives.

His early days in the 1960s were a time of searching for a language of expression, discovering how to find and then 'see' a subject, to express a feeling for the chosen idea and how to get it down in paint.

A request from the Royal Netherlands Marine Corps to record in paint their operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1996 was to change his life and challenge him as never before. Landscape painter, to war artist, is a dramatic career move. From the peace of the South Downs he was transported first to the Balkan conflict, then on to Eritrea, Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq. Over a period of 12 years he painted the activities of both the Dutch and British Marines and Special Forces.

Gordon returned to a more settled life in 2008 and sought-out the tranquillity of his beloved 'South Country'. The South Downs and the Weald have always been Gordon's local backdrop so it seemed an obvious retreat from the horrors of war. It has proved to be the healing medicine.

Out of this reacquaintance with the landscape of his youth has come a body of work that celebrates the 10th anniversary of the South Downs National Park. For the last three years Gordon has walked the Downs and explored the Weald, rivers, villages and woods.

Along with an accompanying book 'A Celebration of the South Downs National Park' a major exhibition of Gordon's paintings entitled 'The Wind in the Trees' will be shown at Rountree Tryon Galleries in Petworth from 12 to 25 September. The exhibition is supported by the South Downs National Park Authority and is held in aid of 'Trees for the Downs' with a percentage of the sales being donated to this tree planting project.

For more details visit www.rountreetryon.com

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Drama inspired by South Downs hits the airwaves

An audio drama recounting the heritage and unique stories of the South Downs is hitting the airwaves and will be available to download.

It comes after an inspiring project last year in which Lewes-based playwright Sara Clifford was commissioned by INN CROWD and South Downs National Park Authority to create a new play exploring and celebrating the landscape, people and history of the South Downs. Sara spoke to over 500 people across the Downs – from museum volunteers, school children and pub goers, to people at family creative workshops, walking groups and village fetes, and weaved the stories she gathered into a one person show, *Cherry Soup*. The play was performed in nine pubs and community venues and audiences loved the humour, history and atmosphere.

"Beautifully written with real resonances for the times we live in" was one of the glowing testimonials.

Cherry Soup was performed by Jo Neary and was an Applause Rural Touring Production.

In response to the coronavirus pandemic and restrictions on live performance, Applause Rural Touring has been looking at new and creative ways to stay connected with audiences and communities, and to support artists to create work in new ways.

Applause has now worked in partnership with the South Downs National Park Authority to record *Cherry Soup* as an audio drama, so many more people can enjoy this inspiring, moving and beautifully-written show.

The show has been adapted and serialised into five episodes. All will be available to download from the Applause website from 19 August and will also be broadcast weekly on Kathy Caton's BBC Radio Sussex show on 13, 20 and 27 August.

Sara Clifford said: "I am very excited to be able to take *Cherry Soup* to a wider audience across the South East: moving the play into a digital/audio format means many more people will be able to experience it, despite the current situation. I hope people enjoy listening!"

Anooshka Rawden, Cultural Heritage Lead for the South Downs National Park, said: "The impact of Covid-19 continues to hit live theatre and performance hard, and we were keen to support independent artists during this time to explore alternative ways to continue connecting audiences with creative content."

To download the tracks visit www.applause.org.uk



Recovery on agenda as MP visits Butser Ancient Farm



Meon Valley MP Flick Drummond visited Butser Ancient Farm near Petersfield for a tour of the ancient buildings and landscape, alongside a discussion of the current challenges and opportunities faced at this unique heritage site in the South Downs National Park.

Butser Ancient Farm, which reopened to pre-booked visitors last month, was a hive of activity on a beautiful summer's day, with visitors meeting the new baby goats, watching thatching and ancient skills demonstrations, and exploring the reconstructed ancient homes and buildings. However, after coming out of three months of lockdown, with a subsequent total loss of income during what would have been the farm's busiest time of the year, it's facing a challenging time ahead.

With the announcement that the new Culture Recovery Fund for Heritage is now open for applications, the visit was a fantastic opportunity for Flick to discuss the government's support package for the struggling arts and heritage sector.

Farm directors Maureen Page and Simon Jay were able to highlight their concerns and hopes for the future as Flick offered her support to any application the farm makes to the Recovery Fund.

Director Maureen Page said: "As Butser approaches its 50th year of opening it has been very difficult for us to close for such a long period of time. We love to welcome visitors to explore the ancient past with us and usually host hundreds of schoolchildren each week to be inspired about ancient life. This in turn helps to fund our ongoing archaeological research work, enabling us to build and experiment with exciting new interpretations of ancient life, and continue our community wellbeing and volunteering programmes. We are anxious to continue this important work and need all the support we can get in order to do so."

Although school trips are permitted to resume from September, there is still uncertainty over coach travel and the way in which schools will be able to travel to locations such as Butser Ancient Farm. With many attractions facing similar issues, the visit was a valuable opportunity to raise these concerns. Flick will be able to represent and highlight these issues in ongoing government discussions.

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY New community running track is ready, set, go!



Hundreds of schoolchildren and runners of all ages will benefit from a new community running track, thanks to £71,000 of Section 106 funding.

Herne Junior School in Petersfield is building an all-weather one-mile running track that will be used by its 470 pupils, other schoolchildren and the wider community.

Despite having an ample-sized field, the school's all-weather outside facilities have historically been limited during the winter months because the field is often waterlogged and muddy.

The new community running track will make exercise accessible to all, throughout the year.

The facility, set to be completed later this year, has been possible thanks to Section 106 funding attached to the Barratt David Wilson development on land south east of The Causeway.

Petersfield Infant School, with 360 pupils, will also be given access to the track, as well as other local, smaller schools and local running groups.

Tony Markham, Headteacher at Herne Junior School, said: "We're passionate about sport at our school but some children don't get involved because they don't like the cut and thrust of team sports. An all-weather running track allows children from every part of our school and local community to run or walk a set course, enabling them to raise their heart rates, challenge themselves and each other. Fun and fitness at the same time? Surely this has to be a great thing for our youngsters!

"This track will make a massive difference to the health and wellbeing of future generations of Petersfield residents."

Tim Slaney, Director of Planning at the South Downs National Park Authority, said: "Section 106 funding has the power to bring real benefits to local communities and I'm delighted that the Authority can help make a difference to Herne Junior School.

"It's fantastic that well over 800 children, as well as the wider community, will be able to enjoy the physical and mental health benefits of this new running track."

Picture by Rich Howorth

Celebrating the heritage wonders of Hampshire



Hampshire's famous Butser Hill

Sheltered harbours, beautiful river valleys, crucial look-out points along the South Downs and life-giving water springs have been central themes in the story of this scenic county.

Today you don't have to step far from the hustle and bustle of urban life in the "Solent City" to find the beautiful tranquillity and rich heritage of the South Downs National Park – with Hampshire making up a third of its area. Many would agree the western end of the South Downs National Park has a quite different feel to the eastern extremity that climaxes in the dramatic Seven Sisters cliffs. This is a land of steep wooded hills, royal forests, heathlands, hop gardens, hidden valleys, trout-filled chalk streams and leafy market towns.

As we mark Hampshire Day last month, Anooshka Rawden, Cultural Heritage Lead for the National Park, shares 10 fascinating heritage facts that underpin the story of this remarkable county.

1. Hampshire takes its name from the settlement that is now the city of Southampton. Southampton was known in Old English as Hamtun, roughly meaning "village-town", so its surrounding area or scīr became known as Hamtunscīr.

2. Hampshire was once linked through river valleys now under the English Channel to Europe. The people familiar with this changing landscape capitalised on its diverse natural resources, following migrating animals and adapting to the seasons. By 4,000 BCE farming became increasingly important, with some deforestation taking place and the first monuments emerging, such as Neolithic long barrows to commemorate the dead. This adaptation of the landscape continued with burial mounds in the Bronze Age and the proliferation of fortified hilltop settlements by the Iron Age. One of the best examples of an Iron Age fort survives at Old Winchester Hill, protected as a Scheduled Monument. If you want to experience the prehistoric in Hampshire, you can book a visit to Butser Ancient Farm.

3. Hampshire emerged as the centre of what was to become the most powerful kingdom in Britain, the

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Kingdom of Wessex, with its capital in Winchester. Today this key period of history is symbolised in Winchester by the commanding statue of Alfred the Great. The powerful King of Wessex managed to hold off the mighty advances of the Vikings – who already controlled most of the north and east of England under the Danelaw – and lay the foundations for unification of the Saxon kingdoms. Why not book a visit to Winchester City Museum to learn more?

4. The beauty of the Hampshire countryside has provided inspiration to some of England's most celebrated writers. Jane Austen's 17th century house in Chawton holds a treasure trove of memorabilia, including her writing desk. This lovely museum reopened this month. Selborne was home to the Reverend Gilbert White, whose "The Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne" has remained in print since 1789. You can visit Gilbert White's House and Gardens to learn more about the man who inspired Charles Darwin and David.

5. Watercress was in great demand due to its perceived health benefits during the Victorian era and this led to commercial watercress farms establishing themselves throughout Hampshire. The geology of the area with flat, chalky downlands provide perfect conditions for the plants to thrive. Today The Watercress Line, or Mid-Hants Railway, is one of the most successful heritage railways in the UK. The Watercress Line reopened on 11 July.

6. Alice Holt Forest in the north of the county played a key role in the defence of the country during some of our most turbulent times, including the Napoleonic wars. Its oaks supplied the shipbuilding in Portsmouth and today the timbers' route is celebrated with the Shipwrights Way, which runs 50 miles through the South Downs National Park from Alice Holt and down to the Historic Dockyard, the home of HMS Victory.

7. Petersfield is the second largest market town in the National Park. Although evidence for Bronze Age activity has been found at Petersfield Heath, the focus of its development was a then-remote church dedicated to Saint Peter. The town's new museum will be opening in 2021 to celebrate the stories of Petersfield and the wider South Downs,

8. Hampshire is home to arguably one of the most scenic churches in Britain. Often called the "The little church in the field", St. Hubert's began as a 9th century Saxon church, before Earl Godwin (whose son was King Harold, defeated by William and Conqueror and the last Saxon king of England), had the chapel built in around 1030. Its interior includes some magnificent and rare medieval wall paintings dating from around the 1330s.

9. The Hampshire countryside is dotted with some amazing stately homes and gardens. Hinton Ampner, owned by the National Trust, is noted for its stunning gardens and collection of fine paintings.

10. The South Downs played a key role in D-Day as a training area holding the thousands of men about to be sent to Europe. Droxford hosted a secret meeting of the War Cabinet in June 1944 where Churchill and others met on the Royal train to agree to delay D-day by one day.

Please check the website of the venue for opening times and remember that many require pre-booking.

Things to do in the South Downs this August

Please check with the venue on availability and remember that prebooking may be required 😊



- Enjoy live music from Live at Langhams, in aid of the Trees for the Downs initiative. Musicians include Serious Child, Tobiah and #MollyMcKenna and the live stream will take place on [Langham Brewery's Facebook Page](#) on 22 August from 7.30pm to 9pm.
- Prepare for a post-lockdown Shakespearean adventure like no other before! Expect a show packed with live music-making, raucous story-telling and typically British social-distancing as the [Weald and Downland Living Museum](#) hosts Midsummer Night's Dream – Open Air Theatre on 23 August.
- Visit [Ditchling Museum of Art + Craft](#) for a thought-provoking exhibition from John Newling, a pioneer of public art with a social purpose. The exhibition features works spanning Newling's 40-year career, including new work responding to society's need to evolve in the face of the climate emergency, and living through the global pandemic.
- Travel back to AD880 and meet Saxons and Vikings from the Dark Ages society who will be offering a glimpse of life in the 9th century and an opportunity to explore parts of Viking and Saxon life. The event takes place at [Butser Ancient Farm](#) on 22 and 23 August.

YOU SAY:

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



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

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

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