

# SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK

## A Note to Yourself

**Taking time to focus on yourself through nature**  
**Funded by South Down National Park Authority**

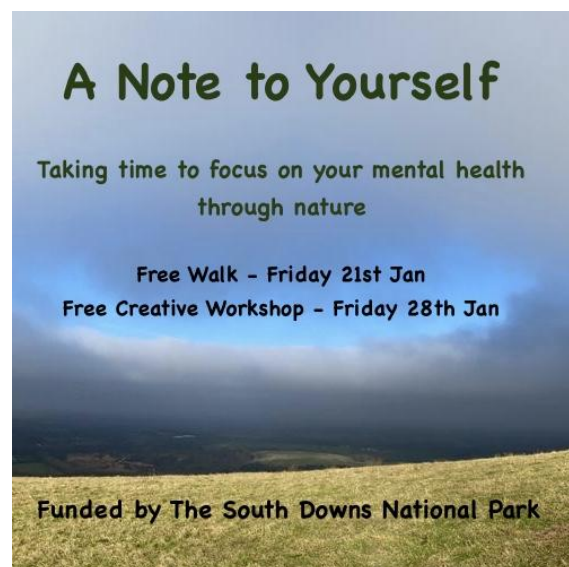
### Evaluation Report; January- March 2022

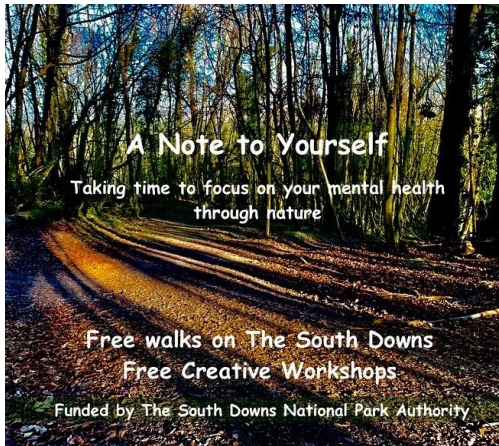
The aim was to encourage people from all backgrounds to take time for themselves to help with their own mental health.

Endorsing and recognising the value of nature, being outside and meeting new people, and how easy it is to access beautiful landscapes and walks in The South Downs National Park. All walks and workshops were free, booked via Eventbrite.

Promoted on: our social media sites, mailing lists for previous attendees to our projects, links with social prescribers and word of mouth.

The majority of attendees were women. Conversations organically led to us reassuring the mums, wives, daughters...that they must take time to look after themselves so that they can continue to support the people in their lives who need them. By refuelling their own energy levels with healthy walks, whatever the weather, to feel strong and nourished and more able to deal with the daily grind.





The outcomes were humbling. Everybody left with a smile.

Many discovered a new perspective in nature and realised that they didn't 'make time' to stop and look at fungi on a fallen branch, or shadows cast by sunlight. Listening to the birds, smelling the damp bark, feeling the breeze. Breathing properly was highlighted regularly, everybody realised that in urban spaces and sitting still breath is shallow and possibly polluted, compared to the crispness of the air on the South Downs.

### Findon - 18/02/22 - Walk & explore Cissbury Ring

16 people. Fabulous walking conditions. The sun appeared half way through.

*"I would never think about coming here, yet its right on my doorstep. Thank you for organising. I loved it."*

Social media comment; *"I felt so flippin happy all afternoon after that. Big tick for my mental health, thank you so much."*

(Imogen has since become friends with Julie and have met up in their own time.)

*"I've wanted to walk round Cissbury Ring for a while, but didn't feel confident going on my own. What a great bunch of people"*

*"I used to come up here when the kids were young but don't do it now. Thanks the walk has made me realise that I should push myself to get out for a walk"*

*"Thank you, I felt completely free walking in the wide, open spaces. It's been a real treat after so much time couped up"*

*"The colours are so inspiring, i didn't realise how much I needed that"*

*"I feel quite 'naughty' being out when I should be doing jobs at home, but now I feel motivated and more focussed to get the work done"*



**Steyning - 21/01/22 - Walk; Upper & Lower Horseshoe Trail, Rifle Range & Millponds.**

5 people. Small groups allow for more personal talks which can be very useful.

New lady: *"I've seen the walks on social media, I knew they'd be good, but had no idea how much I needed that and how important it is to take time out of my chaotic life"*

*"I was so excited about today, I am so grateful for the lift too as this is not accessible for me without a car"*



**25/01/22 - Wellbeing workshop using flora & fauna, experimenting with clay & printmaking, at Old Cart Studios, Findon**

12 people - split into 2 groups, swapped halfway through so that everybody played with clay and with paint. Lots of great chats about playing with materials...and references to the walk and how we all felt 'free' during and after the creative practice.



*"The feel of the clay is so organic and natural, it reminds me of scraping the mud from my boots after the walk!"*

*"I've been wanting to visit this studio for a long time but didn't really know where it was. Very inspiring, I'll ask one of the artists if she runs courses."*

*"I haven't touched clay since being at school, it feels so liberating, being encouraged to play with a messy materials."*



28/01/22 Wellbeing Workshop - mark making, loosening up, drawing with movement.  
Steyning Athletic club. 7 people

The buzz and energy amongst the group was fantastic. 3 new people who immersed themselves in the buy session.

One elderly lady who hadn't been inside with a group of people for 2 years said it was 'pure magic'.

She had been on the walk and we noticed that her whole body swayed, with the charcoal on paper - like the trees on the hill at Cissbury.

One lady worked on a very large scale, on the floor and said how exciting it was using her whole body while she drew.



*"It was very liberating not worrying about what I was doing!"*

*"Having the whole table covered in paper feels extravagant. I can't believe this is free."*

Bramber - 01/02/22 - Walk, 9 people - Nobody had been to Bramber before. They found the circular walk really accessible & would happily come back, reassured that they wouldn't get lost thanks to all the sign posts.

The castle & the scenes around the moat, were a great end to the walk. Everyone appreciated being part of a group, as they wouldn't have felt confident trying it alone.



*"What a wonderful morning, thank you so much for showing me such a lovely walk"*

*"I will definitely come here again and extend it a little bit, knowing that it is all within my capabilities"*

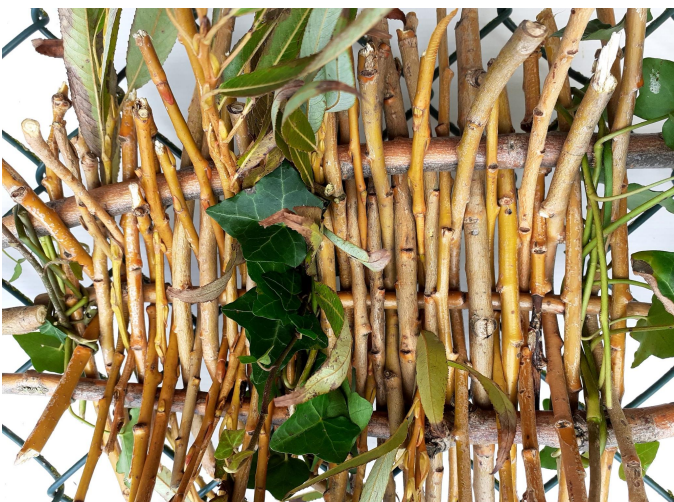
*"I usually walk alone, but realise that I feel much happier talking to other people along the way rather than just listening to my own thoughts"*

Steyning - 08/02/22 - Wellbeing workshop Steyning Athletic club

THREE new people, 5 cancellations due to Covid or poorly children. It didn't have the buzz from the previous week but it was calm and relaxing for the participants and they enjoyed weaving with natural materials.

*"Thank you, I was very nervous about coming but my friend and I agreed that we could just leave if we didn't like it. It's a shame that my mobility is bad, because I would love to do the walks with your group."*

*"I hope you do more of these, I was pleased to be able to walk to the class as I don't drive"*



Storrington - 11/02/22 - Walk; Warren Hill, Georges Lane, Pulborough. 12 people.  
A varied walk through woods that offered the first signs of Spring.

*“When I’m alone I have dark thoughts and I don’t even notice the good things around me. Thank you for taking the time to remind me how beautiful lichen is and the patterns in the bark.”*

*“The woods smell so wholesome, which reminds me of my childhood, so long ago.”*

*“It has been a lovely morning. I will come here again, now that I have seen how much there is to see.”*

*“The shadows of the trees are all dancing happily in the sunshine”*



18/02/22 - Wellbeing Workshop. Chanctonbury Leisure centre, Storrington  
Postponed due to storm - 9 booked.

New date:

04/03/22 Wellbeing Workshop. Chanctonbury Leisure centre, Storrington

Most of the people who had booked for the 18th couldn’t make the new date.

6 booked, only 3 turned up.



A calm and gentle session. 3 people used references from bird books and print outs that we supplied. Looking at textures, patterns and shapes of birds

## Celebration Event at Truleigh Hill 15/03/22

A lovely end to the project.

Sunshine, log fire, singing led by Emily Longhurst, (songs inspired by the earth) snacks and birds singing.

This was a truly beautiful morning, an intimate event that reminded us all of our beautiful natural surroundings. The whole group appreciated the wholesome, serene feeling.

New people attended due to Emily's invitation to her singing groups.



Looking back at all the walks and workshops we are proud to see such a wide age range of people.

There was an organic split on each walk, the less able bodied choosing the gentler, shorter walk. They didn't feel like a burden, going slowly, due to the group's support.

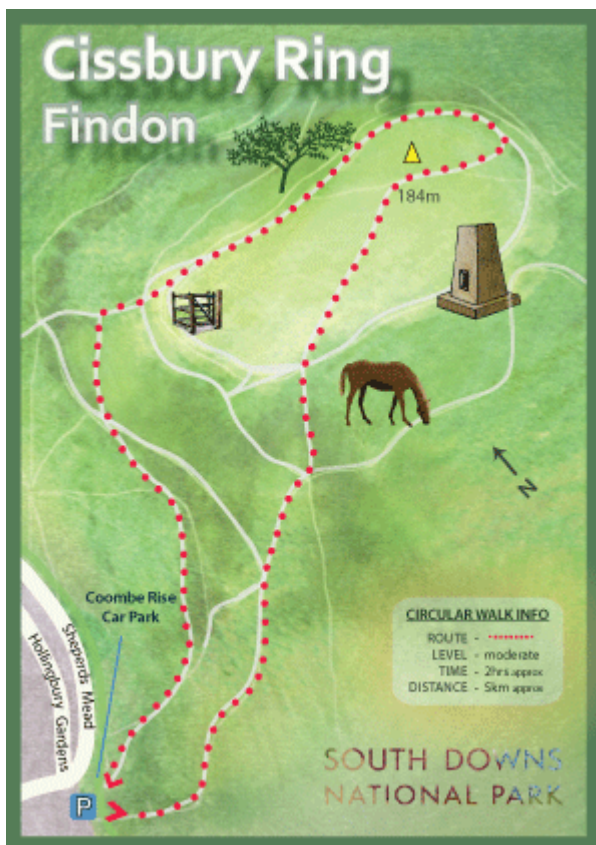
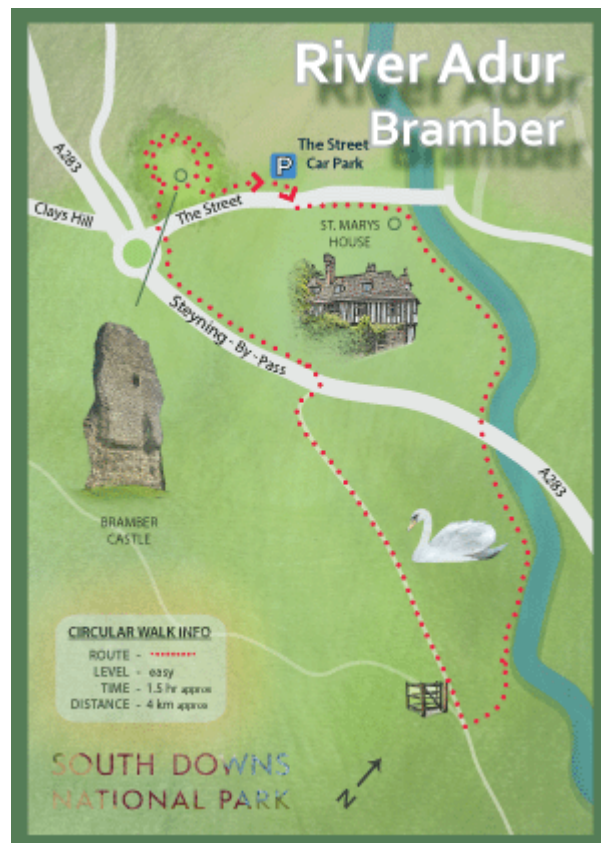
The faster paced people enjoyed the buzz and warmth ...many said that they wouldn't walk that far or fast and felt brilliant for it.

Initially we hoped that people would attend a walk and the workshop a week after. However people's timetables and interests differ so attendance was more random. This wasn't a problem as we were still able to describe what we wanted to achieve whilst drawing or making...a sense of loose freedom...that one feels walking across the Downs.

Eventbrite had glitches which meant that we would be waiting for people to arrive even though they had cancelled their place via Eventbrite. A small, unavoidable, problem that we have had over the years of providing free activities, is that sometimes people forget about it, or don't let us know that they're not coming.

Free Postcards x 4 designs  
Featuring local birds, basic map and landmarks.

Distributed to local villages to encourage people to walk locally. Using the basic map as a starting point, inspired by local landmarks and wildlife on SDNP.

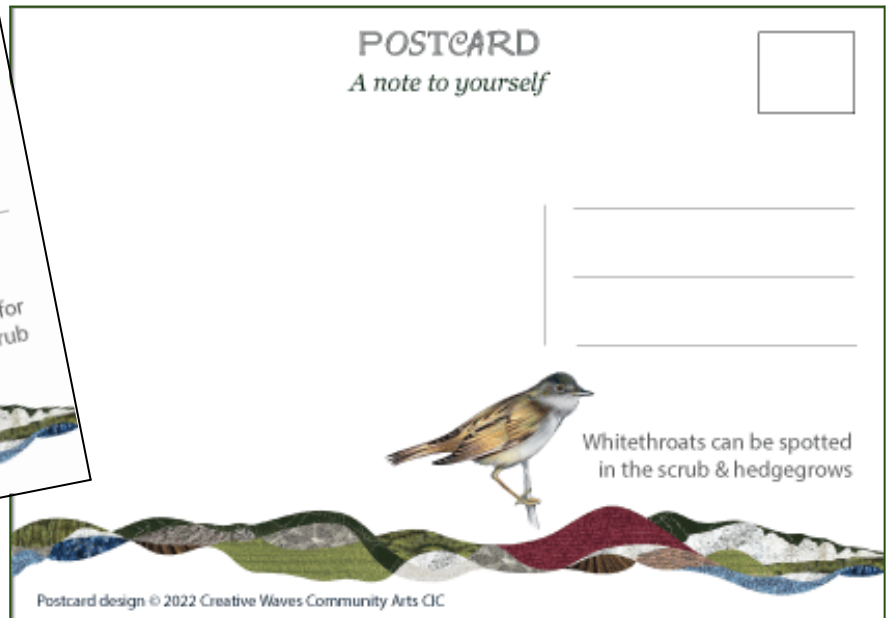
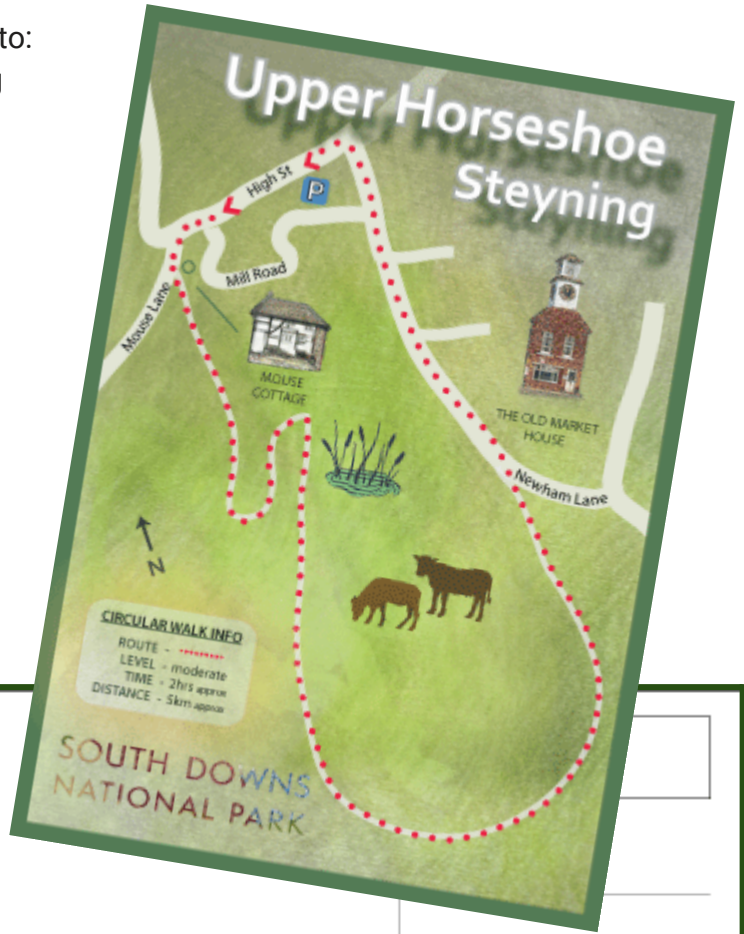
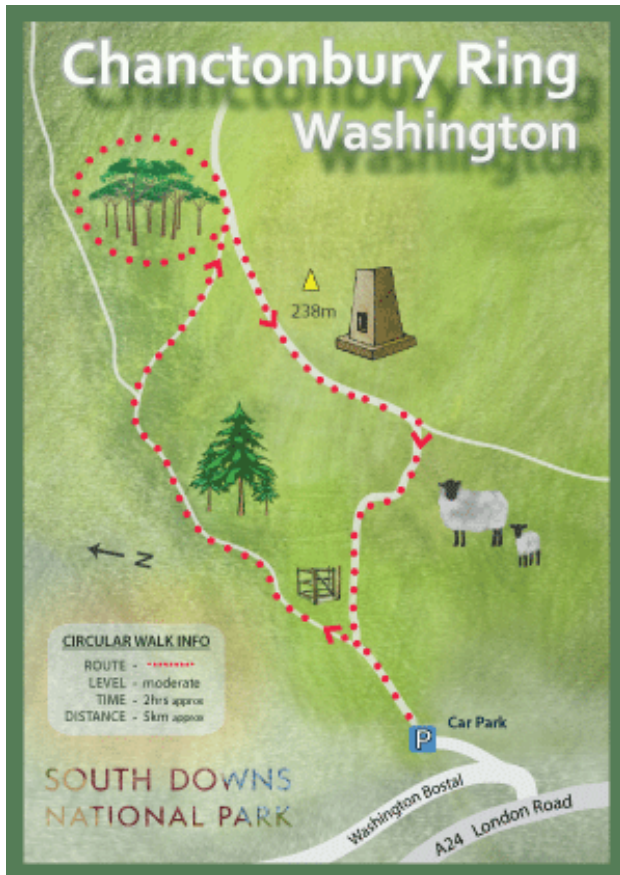


The back of each of the 4 cards features a different local bird.





Bundles of all 4 postcards were delivered to:  
**Steving** - Library, Museum , The Steving Centre  
**Storrington** - Library, Village Hub  
**Findon** - Village Hall, Library  
 (will drop next week as it was closed)



### **Extended outcomes, widening outreach:**

Lady who attended a walk [sign-posted by Freddie, social prescriber] attended another project [for HDC] we ran in Storrington. She brought 2 children, her friend and her 2 children. She was delighted to have a free activity during half term.

This endorses the benefits of partnership working amongst groups and the value of social prescribers who understand their clients and what activities are available within the community.

One of the walkers sent us this;

I Googled Warren Hill and found that there is a cottage and place called The Sanctuary accessible via walking path through the woods. It was the site of a hippy community started by Vera Pragnell in the 1920s. Did you know?

Her grandson Jonathan Addis writes on his website:

"My grandmother Vera Earle {nee Pragnell } inherited a fortune from her father my great grandfather Sir George Pragnell. She bought land in the Sussex downs near Storrington and started a sort of hippie community called ' The Sanctuary ". It was based on the Sermon on the mount in the bible – 'Ask and it shall be given". They gave land to anyone who asked for it. It was unconditional charity as a response to the disillusionment of the first world war and Victorian values. Laurie Lee lived there in a caravan , HG Wells and Aleister Crowley were friends. Fascists , communists and anarchists stayed there along with tramps and eccentrics all of whom were provided for. My mother Deirdre was their only child. Various books were written about the Sanctuary. The community later morphed into a sort of hotel."

<https://www.jonathanaddis.com/shop/other-work/a-painting-by-my-grandfather-dennis-earle-of-my-grandmother-vera-earle-nee-pragnell/>

There are still cottages there today at the actual location called "Vera's Walk".

Vera's cottage The Sanctuary:

<https://www.google.co.uk/maps/place/Veras+Walk,+Storrington,+Pulborough/@50.9165163,-0.42308314z/data=!4m5!3m4!1s0x4875bc2df4e3373d:0x66bab08e0a9816dc!8m2!3d50.9180463!4d-0.4193855?hl=en-GB>

Would it be possible for us to walk to there on Friday or is it too far off-piste?

Either way, it will be lovely to think that we are treading the land that all these brilliant people have trodden before us!

creative  
waves  
COMMUNITY ARTS