

An Oral History and Heritage project for South Downs Schools.

A really exciting history and heritage project has recently begun in the South Downs and we would really love your school to join us.

The South Downs Living History project is being run by the Friends of the South Downs and is jointly funded with the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The project is supported by the South Downs National Park Authority. We already have a website up and running - [www.southdownsgenerations.org.uk](http://www.southdownsgenerations.org.uk) and a Facebook page. By the time you read this we should also have a presence on Twitter and Instagram.

So what is the project and how can your school get involved?

We have six key aims:-

- To impart oral history interviewing and recording skills to primary school pupils and their teachers
- For supervised children to interview the older residents in their villages and localities about the changes they have witnessed in their lifetimes. For these to be filmed and recorded and extracts uploaded to the project website
- To digitise existing oral history interviews, currently on audio cassettes where the recordings are at risk of being lost due to sound degradation (the spools on the cassettes begin to 'bleed' together causing progressive loss of sound quality as the years go by).
- To digitise school log books, some of which date back to the mid-nineteenth century, and to upload extracts onto the website.
- To develop guided walk apps, involving the schools, creating heritage trails in and around their villages and communities.
- To create an educational resource of South Downs heritage: archaeology, history, folklore, and literature, for the free use of all schools.

Due to the Covid 19 pandemic, we have had to put our first two objectives on hold until the autumn, although our participating primary schools: Bury, Shipley, Findon, and Chesswood have still been able to contribute written memoirs and historical school documents.

We have, however, advanced our other objectives. Our website has many fascinating memoirs, oral history interview extracts, local history and folklore anecdotes, and extracts from school log books. We have already digitised an impressive 140 interviews.

Realistically, we can't work as closely with all South Downs Schools as we can with our four partner schools, but that doesn't mean we don't want to hear from you – we would love to hear from you – whether your school is in Hampshire, West Sussex, East Sussex or Brighton and Hove.

Please look at the website. Is there material on there that your school could use? Have you any constructive criticisms? Have you historical information about your school you could share with us? Are there people in your village or locality we could interview?

The South Downs Schools Living History project began on 1<sup>st</sup> January this year and is due to end on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021 (although this may well be extended due to the interruption in school life brought about by the health crisis).

My name is Chris Hare and I am the project manager. I have a background in managing oral history and community heritage programmes. This project is certainly one of the most diverse and inspiring I have been involved with during my career.

You can contact me by email at [chris.hare@southdownssociety.org.uk](mailto:chris.hare@southdownssociety.org.uk) or call me on 07794 600639. I would love to hear from you!