

## Annex 3

### A Snapshot of the Cultural History of the South Downs

by

the Ramblers’ Association

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. The landscape of the South Downs has been moulded by mankind for more than 5000 years. This is the place where the first settlements, farms and villages began in Britain. Brandon states ‘*the Downs were the cradle of civilization in Sussex and Hampshire*’<sup>1</sup>. The evocative landscape still stretches the imagination of residents and visitors alike.
- 1.2. The Downs have also been a source of inspiration to many writers, artists and musicians through the ages. The rolling hills and magnificent views have provided direct inspiration for many great works, while also providing a quiet escape for artistic work to be completed in serenity.
- 1.3. Below is a snapshot of these connections demonstrating the important role that the South Downs have played in shaping our culture and society. They provide a rich legacy which should be treasured and protected. Further evidence will be provided later in the Inquiry.

#### **2. Houses and Gardens (all open to the public)**

##### **2.1. Michelham Priory, Upper Dicker, near Hailsham**

- 2.1.1. The history of Michelham Priory stretches back nearly 800 years to its founding in 1229. It was inhabited by Augustinian canons until it faced dissolution by Henry VIII in 1537. Following the dissolution, the Church of the Holy Trinity was destroyed and the house underwent various transformations. The house still boasts England’s longest medieval water-filled moat and the displays of furniture and artefacts illustrate the property’s religious origins and the development into a country house.

2.1.2. Further information: [www.sussexpast.co.uk/mich/mich.htm](http://www.sussexpast.co.uk/mich/mich.htm)

##### **2.2. Alfriston Clergy House, Alfriston**

- 2.2.1. Alfriston Clergy House is an example of an old restored religious property. It was built around 1360 and was the first property to be purchased by the National Trust. It is a beautiful timber-framed thatched house with a colourful garden.

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<sup>1</sup> Annex 2 – The Specialness of the Proposed South Downs National Park by Dr Peter Brandon – Inquiry Document No: 3275/3/3

2.2.2. Further information: [www.allaboutsussex.co.uk/default.asp?id=placestovisit42](http://www.allaboutsussex.co.uk/default.asp?id=placestovisit42)

2.3. Firle Place, Firle, near Lewes

2.3.1. Firle Place has been kept in the Gage family for 500 years. Sir John Gage purchased the manor of Amyse in 1530 and it is thought that this probably marked the beginning of building operations at Firle. It hosts a fine art collection and one of the ancestors: Sir William Gage was one of the first originators of cricket in Sussex.

2.3.2. Further information: [www.firlestreet.freereserve.co.uk](http://www.firlestreet.freereserve.co.uk)

2.4. Cowdray House, Midhurst, West Sussex

2.4.1. Built in the 16<sup>th</sup> century on the site of an earlier house, the second Cowdray House was regarded as one of the finest country houses of its time. In 1793 workmen preparing the house for the homecoming of the eighth Viscount left smouldering rubbish in the north gallery. Fire took hold and destroyed much of the house. The ruins remain standing today and are being restored.

2.4.2. Further information: [www.midhurst.org.uk](http://www.midhurst.org.uk)

2.5. Parham Park, near Pulborough, West Sussex

2.5.1. Parham Park was originally owned by the Monastery of Westminster but was granted to Robert Palmer in 1540 by Henry VIII. The house has been carefully restored and now holds a range of portraits amongst other antiques and pieces of art. Parham house and gardens are surrounded by 875 acres of forestry and agricultural land, including 300 acres of ancient park in which fallow deer roam. These are descendants of the original herd, which were first recorded in 1628. It is now owned by a charitable trust, which is dedicated to keep Parham open to the public.

2.5.2. Further information: [www.parhaminsussex.co.uk](http://www.parhaminsussex.co.uk)

2.6. Petworth House, Petworth

2.6.1. Petworth House was built in the 1690s although there had been a great house there since at least 1309. It was built by Charles Seymour, Duke of Somerset. He was known as the Proud Duke, so proud, he even refused to have his daughters sit in his presence. The gardens were landscaped by the great Capability Brown and the house has been described as “more of a palace than a mansion”. It was an imposing house, with spiked gateways and huge walls designed to keep out the general public. It was handed over to the nation in 1947 by the third Lord Leconfield and remains in the hands of the National Trust.

2.6.2. Further information: [www.sussexlife.co.uk/gils-guide/petworth.html](http://www.sussexlife.co.uk/gils-guide/petworth.html)

## 2.7. Goodwood House, Goodwood, near Chichester

2.7.1. Goodwood House is the home of the Dukes of Richmond. It is a Jacobean house and the original house was extended from 1800-1806 by James Wyatt. The house holds a substantial art collection which is held in the more modern part of the house.

2.7.2. Further information: [www.information-gardens.co.uk/goodwood.html](http://www.information-gardens.co.uk/goodwood.html)

## 2.8. Uppark House, South Harting

2.8.1. Uppark House is a 17<sup>th</sup> century house which was redecorated in the 18<sup>th</sup> century by the Fetherstonhaugh family, who also started to collect antiques and artworks. Following a disastrous fire it has now been restored by the National Trust and it includes interior decorations of 1750 and 1770.

2.8.2. Further information: [www.yeoldesussexpages.co.uk/histhouses/uppark/uppark.htm](http://www.yeoldesussexpages.co.uk/histhouses/uppark/uppark.htm)

## 2.9. Glynde Place, East Sussex

2.9.1. Glynde Place is another Elizabethan mansion that has remained in the same family for 800 years, the original medieval house being replaced during the Elizabethan period. A lot of the house was built using local flint and chalk, although the stone for the windows and doors was imported from Normandy. It holds a collection of 18<sup>th</sup> century Italian masterpieces and many other fine objects and pieces of furniture collected by the family over the last 800 years.

2.9.2. Further information: [www.touruk.co.uk/houses/houseesuss\\_glynde.htm](http://www.touruk.co.uk/houses/houseesuss_glynde.htm)

## 2.10. Anne of Cleves’ House, Lewes

2.10.1. Anne of Cleves’ House is a 16<sup>th</sup> century house that formed part of Anne’s divorce settlement from Henry VIII in 1541. It is a working house with a marriage licence and offers displays on many subjects important to local history.

2.10.2. Further information: [www.sussexpast.co.uk/aoc/aoc.htm](http://www.sussexpast.co.uk/aoc/aoc.htm)

## 2.11. West Dean Gardens, Chichester

2.11.1. West Dean Gardens are part of a 19<sup>th</sup> century landscaped design. The beauty of the restored Victorian walled kitchen, fruit gardens and the 13 original glasshouses were borne out last year when it won the ‘Garden of the Year’ Award 2002.

2.11.2. Further information: [www.westdean.org.uk/gardens/](http://www.westdean.org.uk/gardens/)

## 3. **Writers**

3.1. Not only have the Downs inspired numerous writers, many who owned homes in the area often making it a base for a large part of their lives. Some of the more prominent ones are listed below, and the connection to the Downs explained.

### 3.2. Jane Austen (1775-1817)

3.2.1. Jane Austen lived with her family in Chawton from 1809 to shortly before her death in 1817. She lived here with her mother and her sister (who, like Jane, never married). It was while at Chawton that she produced and published many of her great works, usually anonymously “By a Lady”. *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Emma*, *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion* were all worked on, or written in their entirety, during her life at Chawton.

3.2.2. Chawton is often regarded as Jane’s literary home and there is a museum now in place in the home to commemorate her life and work. The 17<sup>th</sup> Century house is listed as a building of historic interest and continues to inspire people to this day.

3.2.3. Further information: [www.pemberley.com](http://www.pemberley.com), [www.hants.gov.uk/austen/chawton.html](http://www.hants.gov.uk/austen/chawton.html)

### 3.3. Edward Thomas (1878-1917)

3.3.1. The poet, Edward Thomas, moved to Steep in the Upper Rother Valley in 1913 following a period of ill health. It was at this point, shortly after meeting the poet Robert Frost that his poetry really started to take off. *In Pursuit of Spring* was published in April 1914 followed by a number of other studies and collections. Unfortunately, Edward Thomas’ life ended in battle in the First World War. Like the lives of other war poets his true potential was perhaps never uncovered.

3.3.2. His posthumous influence is undeniable, however. Many writers, including Walter de la Mare, Ted Hughes, Jeremy Hooker and Phillip Larkin have acknowledged their debt to him. As well as being commemorated in Poets’ Corner in Westminster Abbey, he is remembered locally by pictorial windows in two parish churches and by a sarsen boulder memorial on the hillside above Steep in Hampshire.

3.3.3. Further information: [www.envoy.dircon.co.uk/etf/home.html](http://www.envoy.dircon.co.uk/etf/home.html)  
[www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ltg/projects/jtap/tutorials/intro/thomas/chron.html](http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ltg/projects/jtap/tutorials/intro/thomas/chron.html)

### 3.4. Lord Tennyson (1809-1892)

3.4.1. Lord Tennyson spent about 20 years living in the South Downs and his walking inspired some very beautiful poems. He built Aldworth House, laying the foundation stone on Shakespeare’s birthday in 1868. He wrote a group of poems dedicated to his wife while living in the South Downs including *June Bracken and Heather*:

*“There on the top of the down, The wild heather round me and over me June’s  
high blue,  
When I looked at the bracken so bright and the heather so brown,  
I thought to myself I would offer this book to you,  
This, and my love together, To you that are seventy-seven,  
With a faith as clear as the heights of the June-blue heaven.  
And a fancy as summer-new Ad the green of the bracken amid the gloom of the  
heather.”*

3.4.2. Further information: [www.yeoldesussexpages.co.uk/stories/people/tennyson.htm](http://www.yeoldesussexpages.co.uk/stories/people/tennyson.htm)

### 3.5. The Bloomsbury Set

3.5.1. The South Downs were also a cultural home for a group of intellectuals known as the Bloomsbury set. Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) spent some of her life living at Monks’ House in Rodmell. Virginia and her husband, Leonard moved there in 1919. They divided their time between Rodmell and their house in London from this point until her death in 1941. Following a life, which was haunted by periods of mental illness, Virginia committed suicide by drowning in the River Ouse as she felt mental illness returning and was unable to cope with this.

3.5.2. After moving to Monks’ House Virginia began work on some of her more experimental pieces, including *To the Lighthouse*, *The Waves* and *Mrs Dalloway*. As part of the modernist movement she was instrumental in feminist thinking and the development of writing in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Monks’ House saw many famous and influential visitors, friends of the Woolfs who formed part of the Bloomsbury set. Among these were the economist John Maynard Keynes, T.S.Elliot, Roger Fry, E.M.Forster, Lytton Strachey and Vita Sackville-West who had an affair with Virginia and was the major source of inspiration for *Orlando*.

3.5.3. Further information: [www.touruk.co.uk/houses/houseesuss\\_monks.htm](http://www.touruk.co.uk/houses/houseesuss_monks.htm)  
[www.mantex.co.uk/ou/a319/woolf-01.htm](http://www.mantex.co.uk/ou/a319/woolf-01.htm)

### 3.6. Reverend Gilbert White (1720-1793)

3.6.1. Gilbert White was so in awe of the beauty of his home village of Selbourne that he documented many of his observations in *The Natural History of Selbourne*. He is often regarded as England’s first ecologist, illustrating how influential the natural wildlife of the South Downs can be. Gilbert White lived for most of his life (1720 – 1793) in ‘The Wakes’ and his life is commemorated in two beautiful stained glass windows in St Mary’s Church in the village.

3.6.2. Further information: [www.hants.gov.uk/discover/places/wakes.html](http://www.hants.gov.uk/discover/places/wakes.html)

### 3.7. Hilaire Belloc (1870-1953)

3.7.1. Hilaire Belloc moved to the South Downs in 1906, buying King’s Land in Shipley. This included a house and Slindon Mill. Belloc had a deep love for Sussex and it inspired many of his poems. Like Tennyson and other poets he was able to convey the beauty of the South Downs through his gentle poetry and wonderful use of language, for example in *The South Country*:

*“When I am living in the Midlands  
That are sodden and unkind,  
I light my lamp in the evening:  
My work is left behind;  
And the great hills of the South country  
Come back into my mind.*

*The great hills of the South Country  
They stand along the sea;  
And it’s there walking in the high woods  
That I could wish to be,  
And the men that were boys when I was a boy  
Walking along with me.”*

3.7.2. Further information: [www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/PRBelloc.htm](http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/PRBelloc.htm)

#### **4. Art**

4.1. As well as inspiring writers the South Downs has produced and helped to nurture some great artists. At times it has been the surroundings and countryside, but the great houses and families within them have also helped to nurture talent giving them time, space and money to paint. The houses still continue to hold wonderful collections of art and sculpture and what follows is far from exhaustive. Rather it focuses on a few of the more famous artists and sculptors that have roots here.

#### 4.2. Petworth House, Petworth

4.2.1. Petworth House has been a great source of support to artists through the years. J.M.W. Turner was given a studio here by Lord Egremont. This patronage was instrumental in the recognition he received. He enjoyed his visits to the house and produced over 1000 gouache drawings to record the beauty of the place. He produced four landscapes to hang in the Carved Room. His work of the house includes *The Red Room*, *The Lake* and *Chichester Canal*. Some of the works are still found in Petworth House but others have been moved. Other artists were also nurtured during this period. One example is the sculptor Flaxman. He produced a magnificent sculpture entitled ‘St. Michael overthrowing Satan’. Turner also produced a painting of this sculpture while at Petworth.

4.2.2. Further information: [www.yeoldesussexpages.co.uk/petworth/redroom.htm](http://www.yeoldesussexpages.co.uk/petworth/redroom.htm)  
[www.tate.org.uk/shop/turnerpetworth.htm](http://www.tate.org.uk/shop/turnerpetworth.htm)

#### 4.3. George Romney (1734-1802)

4.3.1. George Romney, a great portrait painter, painted an excellent self-portrait while staying at Eartham with his friend and biographer William Hayley. The portrait is unfinished, which in some ways is part of its appeal. The head is turned towards the viewer while the rest of the body remains turned away. That, and the look on Romney’s face, give the impression that he has been unwillingly disturbed. The picture has been displayed by the National Portrait Gallery.

4.3.2. Further information: [www.npg.org.uk/live/romnself.asp](http://www.npg.org.uk/live/romnself.asp)

#### 4.4. Vanessa Bell (1879-1961)

4.4.1. Vanessa Bell was a painter and her husband Clive Bell was an artist who were part of the Bloomsbury set. Vanessa was Virginia Woolf’s sister and lived quite close to her

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at Charleston, a modest 18<sup>th</sup> Century farmhouse. Conditions at the house were basic with no gas or electricity and only basic plumbing, but it was still a source of inspiration. Vanessa Bell wrote of this period:

*“It will be an odd life, but....it ought to be a good one for painting”.*

- 4.4.2. The walls of the house were gradually decorated with murals and the house was filled with a collection of paintings, ceramics and furniture. Their style was very much influenced by Italian frescoe painting and post-Impressionist art.
- 4.4.3. Their skills were also put to good use in the local community. Vanessa Bell, along with Duncan Grant, her friend and occasional lover and her son, Quentin Bell, spent time painting biblical scenes for a church in Berwick. These include a nativity scene and *The Wise and Foolish Virgins*. The artists used local people and scenes as their models. For example, in the nativity scene the barn is a Sussex barn at Tilton, the background includes Mount Caburn near Lewes and two local shepherds were asked to model as well as the artist’s gardener.
- 4.4.4. Further information: [www.inn-quest.co.uk/berwick/berwick.htm](http://www.inn-quest.co.uk/berwick/berwick.htm)  
[www.touruk/houses/houseesuss\\_charl.htm](http://www.touruk/houses/houseesuss_charl.htm) [www.charleston.org.uk](http://www.charleston.org.uk)

## 5. War Artists

- 5.1. A number of artists inspired by the local landscape have also found recognition as war artists. A few are described below.
- 5.2. Eric Ravilious (1903-1942)
  - 5.2.1. One of the foremost English artists to emerge between the wars, his watercolours and lithographs of the countryside near his home in Eastbourne were famous. Perhaps his best known work, though, was associated with London Transport. Woodcuts made for London Transport Country Walks in 1936 continued to appear for 40 years. He was a war artist in World War II until his death.
  - 5.2.2. Further information: [www.modernbritishartists.co](http://www.modernbritishartists.co) [www.londonsel.co.uk](http://www.londonsel.co.uk)
- 5.3. Frank Wootton (1914-1998)
  - 5.3.1. Born in Milford in Hampshire he was credited with giving aviation art a bold new direction. After the war his paintings, which included many evocative scenes depicting aircraft over the South Downs, gained international recognition. He was the official war artist to the RAF 1944-1946.
  - 5.3.2. Further information: [www.theframingcentre.co.uk](http://www.theframingcentre.co.uk)
- 5.4. Gordon Rushmer
  - 5.4.1. Born in Petersfield Hampshire Gordon Rushmer now lives in Liss Forest. His popularity as a landscape painter of atmospheric scenes of heathland and river valley

is matched by his reputation as a military artist. He is an official artist for the Royal Marines and has worked recently in Bosnia, Kosovo, Eritrea, Afghanistan and Iraq.

5.4.2. Further information: [www.gordonrushmer.com](http://www.gordonrushmer.com)

## **6. Musicians**

6.1. There are some notable examples of how the South Downs has helped create music to inspire others.

6.2. Edward Elgar (1857-1934)

6.2.1. Elgar had created great opulent pieces before the First World War, but the war stifled him as it did so many others. He was deeply saddened by it and had lost several friends through its duration. He also began to suffer from a chronic ear condition and may never have composed again if his wife had not recognised his difficulties and found a quiet place to inspire him. The seclusion of Brinkwells in West Sussex allowed him to compose again. His style changed greatly and his pieces became more melancholic and intimate. The premier of these works was disappointing, with a hall that was only half full and some critics felt that it was substandard. However, the Cello Concerto in E minor, Opus 85 is now seen to be one of his greatest works. At times even surpassing *Pomp and Circumstance* in popularity.

6.2.2. Further information: [www.classicalnotes.co.uk/notes/elgar1.html](http://www.classicalnotes.co.uk/notes/elgar1.html)

6.3. Glyndebourne Opera House, Glyndebourne

6.3.1. The first opera house to be built at Glyndebourne was built in 1934 by John Christie. By the end of the 1980s it was becoming apparent that its success was leading to difficulties in accommodating the public demand for tickets. It was announced in 1987 that a new opera house was to be built to accommodate the increased demand. Specifications included that it was to have an enlarged auditorium but retain its intimacy. It had to blend into its surroundings but be a modern building. The acoustics needed to be of the highest quality and it should have improved facilities for everyone who used it.

6.3.2. The new opera house has won many awards for its innovative and beautiful design, both for its architecture and craftsmanship. It continues to be successful, paving the way for the culture and inspiration of the South Downs to continue.

6.3.3. Further information: [www.glyndebourne.com](http://www.glyndebourne.com)

## **7. Arts and Crafts**

7.1. Nowhere has inspired craftsmen and women more than the South Downs including:

7.2. Edward Johnston (1872-1944)

7.2.1. Generally regarded as the father of modern calligraphy he is renowned in British design. He was a major influence on British printing through his calligraphy and type design. He moved to Ditchling to work with his pupil Eric Gill (see below)

7.2.2. Further information: *www.nulis.napier.ac.uk*

7.3. Eric Gill (1882-1940)

7.3.1. Born in Brighton, he was profoundly inspired by Edward Johnston and set up in Ditchling as a sculptor, wood engraver and type designer. After conversion to Catholicism in 1913 he founded the Guild of St George. He designed 11 typefaces the most famous of which was Gill Sans which became the typeface of the railways appearing on signs, engine plates and timetables.

7.3.2. Further information: *www.identifont.com www.designtradingcards.com*