



Applause Rural Touring and South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) announce Full Harvest - a series of audio stories and poems inspired by the South Downs landscape available as podcasts this summer.

Seven writers have been commissioned to pen ten audio stories/poems. The writers are an exciting mix of established and early-career authors who will each provide their unique perspectives on the much-loved South Downs. Each writer is focusing on one of the magical rivers that weave across the landscape.

The writers will be spending time engaging with the communities that live and work in the landscape to explore the untold stories of everyday people.

Listeners will be able to access these stories through listening apps like Spotify, Apple Podcasts, Overcast and Pockets Casts. Audiences can plug in and listen while they walk and explore the landscape, or enjoy at their leisure.

Full Harvest is a development of the highly successful Writer in Residence project that was delivered in partnership with SDNPA in 2019. The outcome was a one-person play called **Cherry Soup** that toured to nine venues and became a digital audio story aired on BBC



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Radio Sussex. While developing **Cherry Soup**, writer and director Sara Clifford gathered many stories from people in the community. **Full Harvest** looks to tell more of these community stories, encompassing a diverse range of voices to discover what the landscape means to people from many walks of life. Sara Clifford returns to this project focussing on The River Ouse, which runs to Newhaven and the Adur in West Sussex. She is interested to explore how people for whatever reason may have felt the South Downs is inaccessible for them and how she can connect them to the landscape, history and culture.

‘The Full Harvest has developed from the project I undertook in 2019, as Writer in Residence for the South Downs National Park and Applause, Cherry Soup. This new project widens the reach to a diverse group of seven writers, and each one of us is focusing on one of the magical number of seven rivers that run across the Park from East to West – its history, geography and stories, and particularly the people that live and work there – to tell new and untold stories of those people and our own responses as artists, to be recorded as podcasts that can be listened to on site.’

Sara Clifford

The ability to access open space has been highlighted through lockdown and COVID-19 restrictions. Full Harvest champions the positive impact outdoor space can have on well-being and resilience. It aims to link more people to their local landscape, its history, its wildlife and habitat.



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Anooshka Rawden, Cultural Heritage Lead for the South Downs National Park, said:

‘The rivers of the South Downs are its lifeblood, reflecting both its chalk geology and the complex ecosystems of habitat, animal and plant life that make this place so special. The Full Harvest is a chance to celebrate those rivers through the eyes of contemporary writers, who will draw on history, geography and place to weave new stories. It’s always exciting to experience the landscape in different ways.’

The podcasts will be launched to the public during the summer of 2021 and will be available to **download and listen** on the SDNP and Applause websites and popular listening platforms such as Spotify and Apple Podcasts:

<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk> /
www.applause.org.uk

Find out more below about each of the seven writers involved in Full Harvest.

Writers

Sara Clifford – focussing on the River Ouse and Adur

Sara studied English at Manchester University and has an MA in Screenwriting. Her first play, **Some Sunny Day**, was selected by both Paines Plough and the Soho theatre, as part of their Writers’ Development programmes, and she has gone on to write over forty plays including commissions for the Soho Theatre, York



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Theatre Royal and Nottingham Playhouse, and her work has been produced in France, Italy, Guadeloupe and Hong Kong.

As Writer/ Artistic Director of her company, Inroads, she works with local communities to create place-based work rooted in their stories. Sara will be writing two audio stories for **Full Harvest** and will explore the River Ouse and the River Adur, she is interested in exploring how the river has shaped the local community and its stories from industry and jobs, to the environment and leisure and how local people view it today.

For more information on lead writer Sara Clifford here <http://www.inroads.org.uk/>

Lucy Flannery – focussing on the River Meon and Itchen

Lucy's writing career has included: working with Alison Stead and Roy Hudd on **Like A Daughter**, a drama for BBC Radio 4, being commissioned to write an original play, **Tomorrow Will Be Too Late**, as part of the D-Day 70th Anniversary Commemoration and writing **Nan** a one-minute monologue created during lockdown for Ink Festival. She has worked on the Chichester Festival Theatre's playwriting course and most recently as Writer-In-Residence at the University of Plymouth. She is both an artistic practitioner and an FE College Governor, she is experienced in working with young people.

Sarah Hehir – focussing on the River Ouse

Sarah has been a writer, dramatist and a drama teacher for over 20 years. She performed at Kosovo's International Literary Festival in 2019, and in 2013 she



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won the BBC Writer's Prize for a radio drama **Bang Up** where the North Downs became part of the narrative and was broadcast as the afternoon drama on Radio 4. An accomplished writer for Theatre, Film, Radio and TV she was recently chosen as the commissioned poet on the Turner Prize '**Connect together**' a project using words and ideas collected through community workshops to create an epic poem about the journey from London to Margate.

A. G. G. – focussing on the River Cuckmere

A. G. G. is a writer and essayist from London. Through literature, he explores a variety of themes including masculinity, belonging, trauma, love, crime and rehabilitation. Photography and filmmaking, are additional mediums he employs as forms of expression. After completing his education he went on to work in a variety of creative roles, most recently as a workshop facilitator addressing gang culture and youth violence across the Capital. He recently signed his first book deal, which is due to be published later this year.

Rosanna Lowe – focussing on the River Arun

Rosanna is an experienced writer, theatre director and performer. Theatre work has included devised work for The Young Vic and La Mama NY and writing two community plays for Wellingborough Castle. She has worked in travel writing, winning awards with the Royal Geographical Society Award and The Times Young Travel Writer. She wrote **Volcanoland**, a travel narrative about Guatemala, collecting extraordinary stories and testimonies about the civil war and its aftermath. In 2019, she was the commissioned writer on the Goonhilly

Village Green Project, a multidisciplinary festival celebrating the nature, heritage and community of Goonhilly Downs.

She has worked on engagement projects with arts organisation MSL in Hastings and created a set of audio story poems called **Ordinary Extraordinary** based on Hastings residents. Rosanna has run a creative writing programme for women in Holloway Prison and writing for wellbeing sessions online for Arts on Prescription, which caters for people with health inequalities including M.E., depression, anxiety, PTSD and brain injury.

Theo Toksvig-Stewart – focusing on the River Rother

Theo is a dyslexic writer and actor. His play **Endless Second** was shortlisted for the Holden Street Theatre Award and the Sit Up Award at the 2019 Edinburgh Fringe. The play transferred to the Park Theatre and Pleasance Islington as part of each venue's 'Best of the Fringe' season and was commissioned as an audio drama for BBC Radio 4.

In 2020 Theo was commissioned by Warts and All Theatre to write an adaptation of **Robyn Hood** developed with children in care in Wellingborough. He was part of the BBC Writersroom Drama Room Scheme 2019/2020 and the 2021 Minack Emerging Playwrights Programme.

Merrie Williams – focussing on the Hidden river in Brighton

Merrie Joy Williams is a poet, novelist and editor. She was shortlisted for the 2020 Bridport Poetry Prize,



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longlisted for the 2020 National Poetry Competition, and is a winner of The Poetry Archive's 'Wordview 2020' competition, permanently featured on their website. She is the recipient of a London Writers Award, and Arts Council England awards for poetry and fiction.

Merrie is passionate about collaborations, as well as residencies and commissions, which help keep her writing practice fresh and evolving. She was a poet-in-residence with MMU Special Collections and Manchester Poetry Library, who are currently releasing an illustrated broadside of one of her poems. Her most recent residency was with Historic England, in partnership with Spread the Word, commissioned to research and write one of their **High Street Tales** (Woolwich).

Merrie has read or discussed her work in various places, including The Southbank Festival, The Seren Cardiff Poetry Festival, and BBC Radio. Poems been published in Poetry Wales, The Interpreter's House, The Good Journal, and elsewhere. Her debut collection is **Open Windows** (Waterloo Press, 2019).

Notes to Editors

- **Full Harvest is commissioned by Applause Rural Touring in partnership with the South Downs National Park Authority**
- Applause Rural Touring is an Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation based in Kent, a rural touring



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scheme that supports communities throughout the South East to access professional theatre, music and other performing arts. Applause is committed to commissioning and supporting artists and companies to make, produce and tour exciting new work across our region.

- **The South Downs National Park** is the third largest National Park in England and has the largest National Park population, with 117,000 residents. The National Park has a rich cultural heritage, with four market towns, 5,860 listed buildings and 616 scheduled monuments. From rolling hills to bustling market towns, the South Downs National Park's landscapes cover 1,600km² of breath-taking views and hidden gems, including 18 distinctive landscapes and 13 European wildlife sites. The South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) is responsible for keeping the South Downs a special place and is also the planning authority for the National Park. The Authority is a public body, funded by government, and run by a Board of 27 Members.
- Further information and images please contact:
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