

Sompting Downs Barn

- Information Sheet for Users -

The facilities

The Sompting Downs Barn, which is used as a base for agricultural & conservation management of the 250-year-old Sompting Estate, has also been designed to accommodate normally up to 25 people seated for a slide talk or speaker, or around tables for a seminar/workshop format. There is also a spacious barnyard with attractive views into which events can spread in fine weather; rustic benches are provided outdoors and stacking garden chairs can also be taken outside.

Classroom facilities

There are two pull-down projection screens attached to beams allowing different layouts, 20+ stacking chairs and 5+ non-stacking; 3 folding tables 2' x 4' and one large and 3 small tables; and a magnetic flip chart / dry wipe board on easel with pens. A digital projector can also be requested but there is not yet any sound system. See booking form for more details.

Literature and artefacts

The Leaflets and Displays. If any leaflets are marked 'please take one', please encourage course attendees to do so, but otherwise not to take away any other materials which are to be kept for reference for all users.

The books in the Barn are the managing trustee's and family's private library. You are welcome to read or use in classes any of the books in the classroom. Please handle them with care and return them to the place(s) they came from. Please note (and explain as appropriate to your group) that no books may be borrowed away from the barn.

Please see that items of interest left on display in the classroom are treated by visitors with appropriate care and safety, and that they are left as found.

The Trustees' Room / Quiet Study Room at the north end of the barn contains older books, archive and private family materials, which although not valuable are valued by the family and in some cases are fragile. So, this room is not normally included in hire arrangements. If it happens to be unlocked please keep the door closed unless it has been confirmed in writing that your group may use it.

Kitchen equipment and supplies

Two electric kettles, cups mugs glasses and plates for up to 25, cutlery, a small microwave and a mini fridge are available in the barn kitchen for use. (The small oven and hotplates are for private family use only except by special agreement.) Please use the mugs glasses etc in the cupboards marked as for public use, and not the private ones in the other cupboards. (Please inform the managing trustee of any breakages.) The cutlery is in the drawer to the left of the sink.

The water is drinking water. Tea, coffee, herbal tea and sugar are to be found next to the kettles and are included within the hire charge. Please do not use food and milk that may be in the fridge or cupboards as they will belong either to the family or to Estate contractors using the barn. *NB Course tutors will need to bring their own perishables ie milk and biscuits/cakes.*

All other drinks and food need to be brought or arranged by course leaders or participants. Sandwiches etc can be purchased from local shops in Sompting Lancing or Steyning, or from the Sainsburys at Lyons Farm Retail Park.

The land

Groups using the Barn are warmly encouraged to include a walk on the Estate in their program. Please keep to Public Rights of Way and Access Areas. Please ask if you need advice in planning this. If you would like to give your group Guided Access to the Mountain woodland or other areas, this needs to be pre-arranged to avoid conflict with land management operations or other activities, so you will need to request this on your booking form. Course leaders are expected to take responsibility for guiding their group including routes they take and giving advice on safety matters. For example livestock and horses, rabbit holes, adders, trees (eg not climbing them! / not going under standing deadwood in windy conditions).

Your comfort and safety

The track to the Barn and the yard and car parking areas are only of bridleway standard so please ensure all attending have suitable footwear and take appropriate care. You will need to appraise the access and site on the day for any specific safety issues. Inside the Barn, the toilet is on the left at the back. If the classroom is not warm enough, you will find there are a small convector heater and electric oil filled heater which can be plugged in, and a fan heater for quick initial warming. Please use power only as really necessary and unplug before

leaving. Garden chairs and a shade umbrella are stacked in the toilet or classroom and can also be taken outside if you wish.

[The family's private gas heater may only be used when unavoidable, for example in the event of electricity failure, and then with due safety consideration eg to site with 1m clear space around it (though it may be back to the wall), and not to cover it, nor to move it whilst lit. Do not use without reference to instructions on board.]

Disabled facilities

The barn being small and dual purpose, the disabled toilet is also used for some storage. Although the storage items are easily moved we do not want a disabled person to be inconvenienced so please let us know in advance if you know a disabled person will be present and we will ensure the space is clear for wheelchair access. We regret a hearing loop system is not currently installed.

Other facilities

If interested in any of the facilities in this section, email the Managing Trustee (see below) to discuss availability and cost.

- *Course Leader Guided Walks on Private routes.* Although there is an excellent network of Public Rights of Way and CROW Access Areas accessible from the Downs Barn, which may be sufficient for most course needs (say if you need advice), additional off-PROW walks can be agreed in advance subject to farm or other activities on the route. A route could be tailor made to meet the Course's objectives. A map would need to be agreed in advance so that farm or other land users affected can be notified and their agreement obtained by the Estate.
- *Assistance with Talks or Walks.* The Managing Trustee or a local farmer or resident might possibly be available to support courses at the Downs Barn with an introductory talk, slide talk or guided walk
- *Trustees' Room / Small Quiet Study Room (3m x 3m).* Access may be requested for individuals or small supervised groups, subject to availability. It is important to ensure that personal and fragile property of the Estate family, including old books and Estate archive materials, are not disturbed.

Health & Safety

The barn is firstly an agricultural facility and so it may from time to time contain equipment used in connection with farming and conservation work. You should inspect the facilities and environment on arrival, assess risk and ensure that all your group are aware of any relevant hazards, and that any children or vulnerable individuals are supervised as necessary.

In the event of fire, everyone must leave the building by the entrance doors (next to which is the Fire Action Plan and a fire extinguisher), and assemble in the car park. Smoke alarms in the kitchen and near the door are tested regularly but if you wish to test them please inform us if you find any defect.

There is a First Aid kit on the kitchen wall. Always follow label instructions.

Keeping the Barn clean and tidy

Please bear in mind that the classroom use is shared with private family Farm Estate use, and we have no contract cleaners, so if possible please leave it as you would wish to find it!

- Washing up arrangements will be self evident in the kitchen; compostable and dry recycling bins are in the sliding drawer under the sink, please put all organic waste into the biodegradable liner-bag in the small compostables bin, not the landfill one. The managing trustee personally takes any rubbish home when full but may sometimes be unable to do so for several weeks at a time, so if any bins are getting full and you are able to take them away for disposal, that will be much appreciated by the next Barn user.
- For the floors, if needed, you will find a broom, mop-and-bucket, and dustpan-and-brush in the toilet and wash room (though the dustpan tends to wander around the barn).
- There is also an outside tap on the end of the Barn for any muddy washing, however this is turned off at the stopcock inside during months with a frost risk.

Thank you!

Security

When you leave the Barn unattended, please leave windows doors and gates locked and lights off, and importantly, please also make sure that all blinds are drawn down when you go. Course tutors please ask separately for instructions regarding burglar alarm and window keys.

Further information and questions

Please let us know your experiences and recommendations to help us keep this information up to date. The website, www.somptingdowns.com, offers more information on the Sompting Estate, the local area and the Downs in general. If you have any further questions or comments please email the Sompting Estate's Managing Trustee on somptingdownsbarn@dsl.pipex.com. **Thank you for your interest in the Sompting Downs Barn.**