



## **Smocks**

**On left - Sussex Smock, linen. Early 20<sup>th</sup> century Ref: 1965/454**

**On right - Sussex Smock, linen. Early 20<sup>th</sup> century Ref: 1966/139**

**Worthing Museum and Art Gallery permanent collection**

This work has been chosen to support 'Our Place' – Annual Schools Exhibition 2015 - celebrating the built heritage of the South Downs. Towner Gallery in partnership with South Downs National Park Authority, Worthing Museum and Art Gallery and the Flora Twort Gallery Petersfield

## **About smocks**

Smocks were worn by English and Welsh countrymen during the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth Centuries. Essentially a practical, hard-wearing garment, its surface decoration evolved into a distinctive folk craft which reached its peak in the mid-nineteenth century.

It was usual for a man to own two smocks. His working smock was made of coarse twill with very little decoration. The other was more ornate and made from a finer linen, often by his wife: it was kept for Sundays and special occasions.

There were many types of smock. The most commonly worn in Sussex was the round-frock which is identical front and back. A distinctive feature of most Sussex smocks is the lack of elaborate decoration. Instead, they have very fine smocking and embroidery worked on the yoke, collar, cuffs and shoulder. The round-frocks on display at Worthing Museum and Art Gallery were probably made and worn in Sussex in the early part of the twentieth century at a time when the wearing of smocks was declining in other counties.

### Understand & Evaluate

Consider the type of work a countryman or agricultural worker might do and give some reasons why the smocks popularity declined in the early twentieth century. Can you think of other reasons why people might choose not to wear a smock?

The different embroidered designs on smocks were specific to different regions or occupations. How does clothing today convey certain messages?

Why is it practical to have particular clothes for specific occupations? Discuss the purpose of uniforms, you could begin by discussing school uniforms as a starting point.



Sussex Smock (un-dated) Ref: I965/468

### Explore and create

Create designs for your own school uniform. Think about the purpose and identity of the designs you are creating.

Can you incorporate traditional smock designs onto a modern day item of clothing?

Have a go at the traditional smocking and embroidery technique used in the smocks. How does the material or fabric used effect the end result?

## Further links to the National Park

Use the South Downs National Park Learning Zone to explore <http://learning.southdowns.gov.uk/>.

[Learning outside the Classroom](#) including links for health and safety and practical support in planning your work away from the classroom.

[About the National Park](#) The South Downs National Park is the newest of the National Parks established in 2009. All National Parks are special places that are recognised for their stunning landscapes, amazing wildlife and rich heritage, as well as providing fantastic opportunities for enjoying and learning about what makes them special.

[Geology and landscape](#) There are 7 distinctive landscape character types that make up the South Downs National Park. Find out more about the different landscape types across the South Downs by looking at the [Sense of Place](#) toolkit that includes fantastic maps and information about each distinctive area.

[Farming and Land management](#) Over 85% of the South Downs National Park is agricultural. Farming, and in particular, traditional mixed farming, has created the distinctive landscape that makes the South Downs such an iconic place. Sheep farming and growing arable crops were the principal agricultural activities on the South Downs, albeit in varying proportions, until the end of the 19th century when sheep farming became progressively less profitable.

[Habitats and wildlife](#) Livestock grazing, including grazing by sheep, has ensured a rich tapestry of habitats exist across the South Downs National Park. Grazing helps to maintain species diversity in chalk grassland and heathland sites. Without this active grazing management these special habitats would quickly scrub over, losing important biodiversity and species types.

[Culture and heritage](#) Shepherds would traditionally stay on the South Downs with their flock throughout the lambing season. During this time they would sleep in Shepherds Huts, a distinctive part of the heritage of the South Downs. Most of the surviving huts date from Victorian times but Shepherds huts have been used for over 400 years. This transient building is as iconic as some of the local vernacular of towns and villages. For more information about the building materials used across the National Park see the presentation on [Buildings in the South Downs Landscape](#).

[Access and recreation](#) The South Downs National Park is a very accessible landscape with over 3,000 km of rights of way including the South Downs Way, a 160 km National Trail stretching from Winchester to Eastbourne, see: <http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/south-downs-way> for more details.

[Economy and industry](#) Nowadays the industry of the South Downs is dominated by farming and tourist related businesses. There are also a wide range of other businesses, for example new technology and science, which support local employment. You can find out more about these different types of industry in the [State of the National Park Report](#).