

NEWS



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RAILWAY INVENTOR'S INNOVATION AT NEW SUSSEX HERITAGE CENTRE.

ONE of the first dynamos to light up a house in Brighton has been installed among exhibits at the new Sussex Heritage Centre opening soon in Hassocks.

The dynamo was bought in the 1880s by Magnus Volks, creator of the Volk's Electric Railway in Brighton, to bring electric light to his own home before he moved to mid Sussex.

The great man, who later installed the largest lighting system in at George IV's Royal Pavilion, fitted his private dynamo in his garden shed in Preston Road.

Volk's powered it with a gas engine connected to the then domestic gas supply of the town. The dynamo worked wonders producing 50 volts of current, enough to light up the rudimentary bulbs available at the time.

Both Volk's dynamo and the gas engine are now owned by Volk's Electric Railway Association, which is now lending them to the new Sussex Heritage Centre at South Downs Nurseries at Stonepound, Hassocks.

The heritage centre is the brain-child of Jonathan Tate, owner of the garden centre, who hopes it will become a tourist attraction showcasing everything connected with the heritage of the South Downs area.

Jonathan has assembled an array of other machinery, craftsmen's tools and farming implements that he hopes will reveal the secrets and skills of a bygone age.

Volk's ingenious homespun electrical equipment is now alongside the other exhibits of carts, milk churns, blacksmiths tools and ploughs at the site just off the A273.

The heritage centre is staging an official opening this spring, on 5th April, when it will become an integral part of the popular South Downs Nurseries.

While the centre itself will concentrate on traditional crafts and trades such as the blacksmith, the wheelwright, the trug maker and the carpenter, a new Heritage Garden outside will display interesting plants such as old local varieties of fruit, local plants from times gone by, such as medicinal herbs.

"We already have a high reputation for raising and selling rare, unusual and exotic plants", Jonathan says, "And there are fascinating stories to tell about vintage Sussex plants long since gone or forgotten."

The plants of interest will be set around a patio area, accessible from the nurseries' new Olive Tree Café.

Jonathan explains: "I want as many people as possible to find out about the heritage of the local area, so admission to the exhibition will be free."

Instead of charging for entry, the Heritage Centre will ask for donations, which will be given to charities in the area.

Details about the development of the new attraction are being posted on the website at www.south-downs.co.uk

Alternatively, people can pop into South Downs Nurseries to find out more about the centre's progress as work underway may be viewed from the coffee shop.

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Further media information and interview requests to Karen Sexton, Marketing Manager at South Downs Nurseries on 01273 616011 or email Karen.sexton@south-downs.co.uk.

ISSUED by Trevor Butler PR: Telephone 01444 451 729, email: heritage@tbutlerpr.co.uk

IMAGES – a selection may be downloaded from www.tbutlerpr.co.uk/southdowns