

Railway Land Wildlife Trust

September 2017
Edition No. 93

www.railwaylandproject.org
Registered Charity No. 800655



Dates for your Diary

There will be a variety of events held during the autumn and winter months advertised to our membership by email, facebook and on our website, see above.

Sunday 17th September 10am - 4pm Lewes Fossil Festival.

A family event celebrating all things fossilized and including games, stories, a treasure hunt, sharks teeth (!), fossils of course, and a chance to visit the Giant Dinosaur...
£3 per child - adults free.

Saturday 23rd and Sunday 24th September, 10am-4pm, Apple Pressing. This is part of the Lewes Octoberfeast festival.

Whether you're an apple-grower or an apple picker, bring your apples along to the Linklater and have them pressed for a moderate charge of 50p per litre. See Page 2

October Half Term 'Signs of Autumn' 10am - 12.30 Monday 23rd October - Family drop-in activities.

We are planning another creative event for children during half term week and will put details on our website and facebook.



Sunday 19th November at 4pm, A Benefit Gig for the RLWT by Sussex Duo, 'Tom'

A benefit performance for
The Railway Land Wildlife Trust

Following their sell-out show at Bom-Banes
in Brighton we are pleased to present:

TOM

Sunday November 19th at 4 p.m.

"Witty, self-penned acoustic songs from
the Sussex duo of Colin and Lance.
Prepare to be moved by tales of unrequited love,
vague politics, vegetables and superheroes".

Suggested donation £5, on the door.
There will be a break for refreshments.

Linklater Pavilion
Railway Lane,
Lewes
BN7 2FG



Lovely Apple Juice from your own fruit!



Lewes and many of the surrounding villages are full of apple trees but, unfortunately, lots of fruit goes to waste every year.

Well, thanks to the generosity of the South Downs Sustainable Development Fund, Lewes Octoberfeast has its own fruit press and on Saturday and Sunday, 23rd and 24th of September, from 10am to 4pm, whether you're an apple-grower or an apple picker, bring your apples along to the Linklater Pavilion, home of the Railway Land Wildlife Trust, by the river Ouse, in Lewes and have them pressed for a moderate charge of 50p per litre.

In previous years we've pressed lots of different varieties with many, such as Bramleys providing surprisingly delicious sweet juice. Also don't worry if your quantity is small. Our presses could well generate a litre of juice from just a couple of kilos of apples, meaning you could then walk away with

your very own, fresh, natural fruit juice and not have those apples drop and go to waste on the ground.

It's best to bring washed fruit plus clean plastic containers to take your juice away in but, if in need, we will have plastic bottles to sell at 50p each.

If you would like to help please contact Mark Ridgwell on: mark@tasteandflavour.co.uk

FIND OUT MORE AT: www.lewesoctoberfeast.com



Two New Faces

Our new Assistant Community Ranger is **Kim Dawson**.

With a Council restructure coming Kim can only be offered a contract until January but we hope she will be with us longer.



Ruth Collens has joined us as an Administrative Assistant for two half days a week, and has already become an indispensable member of the team. She has taken over the work of arranging venue hire and processing membership subscriptions, and has also brought with her a wealth of knowledge and enthusiasm for environmental education.

Apples on the Railway Land

I had an interesting phone call from Martin Stenning who had been going through some old papers and had come across a note from the Fruit Officer, H.A Baker, of the Royal Horticultural Society at Wisley, dated 23rd November 1989! Martin is busy writing a book and was happy for me to relay the key points on his behalf.

These were that Mr Baker had identified five species of apple on the Railway Land as follows:

- Lord Derby
- Tyler's Kernel
- Herefordshire Beefing
- Kentish Quarrenden
- Rode Island Greening

Quite apart from wonderful sounding names, Martin went on to talk about the fact that apples originally came from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and were brought west along the silk route. The reason that on the whole apples are sweet, he continued, was due to the brown bears that preferred the sweet variety and so spread their seeds in what were apple forests. A few remnants have been preserved.

As Martin said, it just shows how important it is to keep notes! And indeed this got me looking up the apple story with the following quote from the Daily Telegraph in 2009.

'Scientists have drawn up a 'Red List' of 44 species of Central Asian fruit trees that could soon disappear unless drastic action is taken.

Around 90 per cent of the fruit and nut forests in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan have been destroyed over the past 50 years.'



© Vassiliy Mikhailin

Many of the apple trees blooming in our back gardens are descendants of these ancient Central Asian varieties, which were distributed west along the Silk Road by traders. Experts have warned that the demise of the wild trees – and their unique genetic make-up – poses a real threat to our own food security.

As a result of the fragmented, mountainous geography of Central Asia, these plants display exceptionally high genetic diversity. They have evolved with a higher tolerance of pests and disease and could prove vital in the future development of new disease-resistant or climate-tolerant fruit varieties. Our less diverse domestic varieties are more vulnerable to these threats and desperately need the genetic 'back up' of their ancient cousins to ensure survival.

Something to think about!

John Parry

A New Trustee

Barry McNulty has joined the Board of Trustees bringing our number up to 10.

His professional background is in strategic planning and business intelligence, so he brings experience and skills which will be very helpful to the Trust.

With two young daughters who love playing on the Railway Land, he and his family are regular Reserve rambles. We are delighted to welcome him.



Where are they Now?

This summer, by chance, I met three ex JMB members whilst in town and thought it would be good to find out what they'd remembered about their time as Board members, and what they had gone on to do.

Naturally, they are all busy people, and not everyone I contacted has replied yet, but here are Max (from the 'mid nineties') and Declan from the 'noughties'!

Pat Rigg

Max E H Mawby

I'm 31 now, and working for the Behavioural Insights Team in London. I was at Southover and then Ringmer. John Parry came in to speak whilst I was at Southover. He introduced us to both the Railway Land and the Junior Management Board. He was inspiring and knowledgeable and I think I joined as one of the representatives of my school.

Our group started by choosing the RLWT logo, which took a long time, as there were many entries. Then we were involved in planning what would go on the information board at the entrance - we were helped by the ranger Annabel Kennedy, who had wonderful dreadlocks! Meetings were often long, but we achieved a lot.

My strongest memory is the work we did on the signal box. We planned for the opening, with John, writing our speeches and practising delivering them standing on beer crates to what seemed like large crowds, and in front of David Dimbleby!

With Annabel we planned the kitting out of the signal box to make it child friendly and attractive, and we got personally very engaged in this. I left after that and spent more time with Glyndebourne Youth Opera, but I took with me the confidence to speak in public, express my ideas and relish decision-making.

Although I don't live in Lewes at the moment, I feel wonderfully connected to this part of my home town, proud of my contribution and love showing friends and visitors from all over the world what we achieved.

Declan O'Keeffe

I was part of the JMB from when I was 12 in 2005 till about 15. Mum told me about it and it seemed to be right for me. I liked the talking about the plants and stuff in our meetings and I enjoyed the bridge project. I can't read so I was happy that people read things out or explained them.

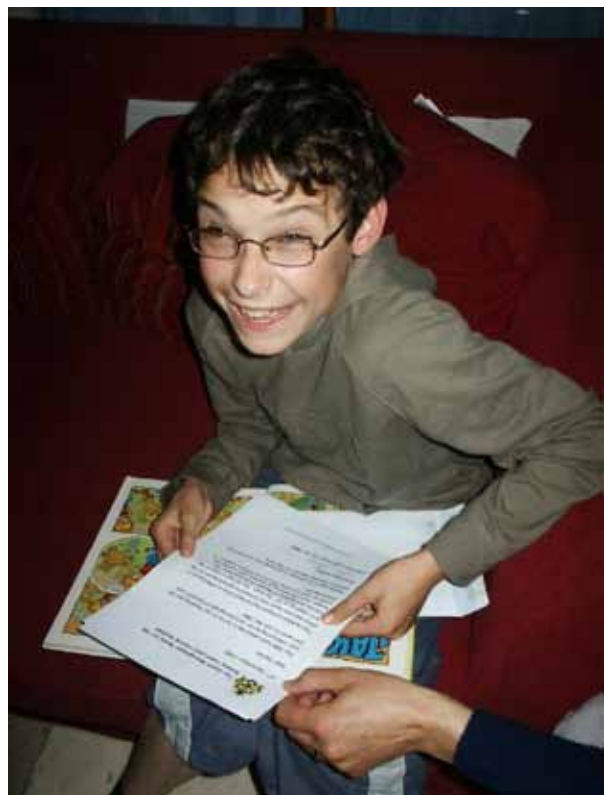
My main contribution was being part of the 'bridge' project, and when we made a video explaining about the JMB which was used in schools, I think I was most helpful. The other board members were nice to be with but I have not seen them since.

After I left the JMB I was a helper at the Mohair Centre which runs courses for Small Farm Training. I did this for several years both while I was at college and then when I left. Now I work at the Chailey Heritage Enterprise Centre. I like going there. Having other people with disabilities there makes it the right pace and a good place for me to make friends. We make cards and leaflets and put designs on mugs and t-shirts.

Because I was on the JMB for several years it gave me a big enough experience to be able to work at the Mohair Centre and then be able to work at CHEC.

This is a picture of me when Mum read me the letter saying I had got onto the JMB in 2005!

© Ruth O'Keeffe



Rusty Business

Britain's native Black Poplars (*Populus nigra* ssp. *betulifolia*) used to be a much common sight in the Sussex countryside. These large trees which often have a leaning trunk when mature – think leaning tower of Pisa – tend to grow in damp places near rivers and were sometimes known as water poplars.



They didn't fare well with human clearance of riverbanks and drainage of floodplains but were still a familiar sight in the 19th century because they were being planted. They are, it must be said, rather fussy breeders. First they need bare damp mud - which stays all summer without drying or flooding - for a seed to grow, and second they need each other. The trees are either male or female and where they were planted in the past, it was often only males planted. After about 1850 they were rarely planted at all – hybrid black poplars were seen as more productive trees, the old natives got old and died, or bred with the hybrid black poplars and a population survey a few years ago identified just 38 mature trees left in Sussex. A breeding and planting program started and Wakehurst Place supplied our Railway Land black poplars which we planted by the Ouse at the site of some old allotments, in 2002.



They have grown fast and strong – look at them in June and you would think them lush and vigorous. But suddenly in July or August they start to look sickly and drop their leaves. They have a leaf rust. But why so strong and healthy early in the year if they are sick? The fungus survives through the winter on fallen leaves but the spores produced in the spring are incapable of infecting the poplar trees again. They must have a different host (*Allium*, *Arum*, *Mercurialis*, *Larix* or *Pinus* depending on the rust) and only when the spores are produced on this second host (in high summer) can they re-infect the poplars. So our Black poplars get a break to grow and thrive through the spring and early summer and then each year are re-infected late in the year. This probably means that they will survive. In late summer they can't photosynthesise (and so can't actually grow) but there is a strong likelihood that they won't die of the disease. So enjoy their vigour early in the season.

Thyone Outram, Community Ranger
Southover House
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New projects at the Linklater

We have two new projects starting this autumn, both of which allow us to extend one of our key aims – making the benefits of engaging with nature accessible to all.

Get Creative – Get Into Nature

This is a five week course for learning disabled adults that is being run in partnership with **Culture Shift CIC**. The course focuses on art and creativity that is inspired by the natural world, and will be a combination of outdoor activity and indoor art sessions. The lead artist, **Anne Colvin**, will be working with participants every week, with additional support and expertise provided by the Railway Land Wildlife Trust's staff and volunteers, as well as the Lewes District Council Community Ranger.

It is fantastic that we have found a way to carry on providing high quality, inspirational opportunities for learning disabled adults and are hopeful that this will lead to further fruitful work and partnerships.

Supporting mental health through connecting with nature

Sussex Community Foundation have kindly given the Trust a grant to help run a pilot project for local people who are experiencing mental health problems. This is an area of work that the Trust is very keen to develop, both because the evidence of the benefits for mental well-being of being in nature is overwhelming, and because we have such excellent facilities in the Linklater to provide a safe, non-judgemental place for vulnerable people.



This project will be rolling out over the course of the next year and if you would like to know more about it please get in touch with me. Helen Meade at coordinator@railwylandproject.org

Update on the Heritage Lottery Funded Resilience Project

The **Resilient Railway Land** project got underway in May, with an emphasis on underpinning the future of the Trust with a well developed long term strategy and business plan, and the expertise to promote our work to new audiences. We have recruited an excellent team of freelance consultants to work with staff, trustees and volunteers and have already made great progress - both in clarifying our overall direction and in establishing how the Trust can become more financially self sufficient, crucial for any charity in the current economic climate.



The project has been a valuable opportunity to reflect on the Trust's many strengths and opportunities, and to look ahead to how we can build on them further. Trustees and staff are united in their desire to forge a clear and sustainable path for the Trust, and many of the initiatives you will see unfolding in the next months and years are as a result of this support from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Plumpton College comes to the Linklater

We are very happy that in September the Plumpton College Supported Intern programme will be starting at the Linklater. This programme supports young adults with barriers into work. It consists of a combination of real work experience opportunities and learning through land based opportunities, and is a great fit with many of the opportunities afforded by being based at the Linklater, and in Lewes more broadly.

Helen Meade, RLWT Programme Coordinator

Looking back at Summer 2017

It has been a very busy summer! Along with the first school visits of the 468 project - (see page 9) there has been a wonderful array of community events that have brought literally thousands of people to the Linklater – many for the first time. Huge thanks is due to the small army of volunteers that have made all of these activities possible. Here are a few highlights:

Bee Day back in May saw a celebration of all things bee related. There was something for everyone, from small children to committed and knowledgeable bee keepers – arts, crafts, quizzes, honey, a demonstration hive and an update on the research at the Laboratory of Apiculture and Social Insects from Professor Francis Ratnieks.



In June our **Annual Festival** took place on the hottest day of the year! Temperatures soared but people were undeterred and turned out in their hundreds to enjoy all sorts of stalls, activities and talks .

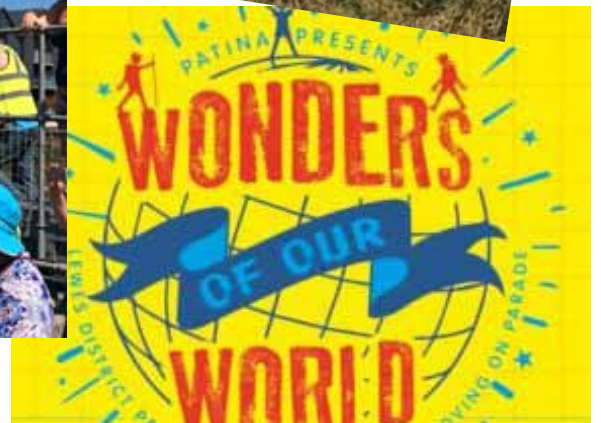
Many people were drawn to the festival by **Wishworks Puppets'** specially commissioned show 'Ako the Aye-Aye', based on the children's book of the same name by Dr Alison Jolly.



In July **Patina** brought The Wonders of the World to Lewes in their fabulous Moving On parade. The display of their costumes and big builds at the Linklater was beautiful and inspiring, from giant chameleons in the trees to a dragon curling around the front steps – it was a huge delight for all who came to see it and made the Reserve a very magical vantage point for the raft race!

Helen Meade

pictures from Patina facebook page



August means Artwave in Lewes and this year we were delighted to host 'Art First - Linklater!'

This fabulous array of work by local artists attracted over 625 visitors, who commented on the wide variety of styles, the range of media on offer, and the 'fantastic' atmosphere of the building, with its natural light, views of the river, and a new layout for the folding doors which made circulation easy.



above: jewellery by Karen Wraith,
left and below: guests at the preview, sculptures
by Jennifer Shelley and paintings by Katwish.



The good weather over the bank holiday weekend undoubtedly helped entice people to walk on the Reserve - and there was plenty of opportunity to promote the Trust's work and the Reserve's charms.



There were several members of the Trust involved as artists, and sitters of the exhibition, and the support from our volunteers was central in making this event a success and one that has benefitted the RLWT.

If you are not a member yet, please consider joining us. See the back page for more details.

Pat Rigg

left: Tom Walker's pastel 'Chalk in its own Light' and Jennifer Shelley's sculptures and lettering.

right: 'Mere' a pastel by the editor, Pat Rigg



RLWT 468 Project

An innovative schools project is in progress. Dr John Parry's '468 project' completed its first phase with children from Lewes Primary schools. It is named '468' because the children start in Year 4 and return in Years 6 and 8. In 2016, a pilot project was run with 96 year 4 pupils from St Pancras, Western Road and Southover Primary Schools. It was successful enough to spawn this year's project which attracted 6 Lewes schools with 193 Year 4 attendees - each for a one day visit. Iford & Kingston, South Malling, Wallands, Western Road, St. Pancras and Southover Primary schools all took part.



The days started with a fast paced and inspiring video presentation and discussion on the history and achievements of the RLWT. Then, to help the children to locate and orientate themselves to the site, the children attached hexagonal (Linklater Pavilion shaped) card to maps and photographs of the Reserve and Lewes which were located around the room. Following an interesting question and answer time the children divided into three groups and headed off outside to follow an hour's route through the Reserve.



Each group took a different route and each child had an outline map of their route through the reserve. With deliberately slow and thoughtful steps they walked their routes, observing around them as they went. As they walked their route they annotated their own maps with their own descriptive names, making their maps truly their own creation. The children commented on how much more they noticed by walking slowly. They noticed how much the sights, sounds and smells changed along their route. It took a while for some children to realise there were no wrong answers but once they realised their map was their own, their imagination and creativity were ignited. It was lovely to observe how much they enjoyed it. Their maps became annotated with such place names as 'The Gate of the lonely lands', 'Muddy's trap', 'Chamber of secrets', 'The hollow of spiders', 'The Faraway tree' and 'The bridge of the three brothers'.

After lunch each group returned to a walk through the Reserve, but this time they walked their route in reverse and led the way. Their task was to consider a number of thought provoking questions such as 'How do creatures get into the ponds and ditches if they are not put there?' and 'Where does the water go when the water levels drop?' Their maps are being kept safe until they return again in two years' time. It will be interesting for them all to reflect on their work, to build on it and to notice how much their learning has progressed since their visit in 2017.



These are some of their comments:

I enjoyed it a lot because we didn't just get told what we were supposed to do but we were allowed to do what we wanted to do to complete the task.

We could use our imaginations and our own language to name the places.

I liked it when we got to do the map because we could stop and look, hear and see to name the places.

It was tiring but fun. There were no wrong or right answers.

It was different to other trips because it was outside and we could hear birds, cars and other things.

I liked making the map because I liked putting the stickers on & naming places & walking around the land.

We didn't have many rules apart from respecting the place.

Fran Torr

John would like to thank Fran Torr, Anne Parry and Helen Meade for their help with the schools and Sherry Wilson for her photos which show the introduction screen for her willow class, John working with some of the children and one of the groups with their maps which can be found at: <http://db.railwaylandproject.org/>

We have relaunched our membership scheme!

Many of you will already be aware that we have relaunched our membership scheme. The new scheme offers different types of membership, including individual, household, youth and unwaged categories. It also offers much more to members. As well as the usual updates and the chance to vote at the AGM, members will now receive significant discounts on the events, clubs and courses that we have planned for next year. On top of this there will be members-only events at the Linklater and the warm glow of knowing that you are supporting valuable local work in environmental education and social inclusion.

Membership is an important part of our future plans, not only in generating income but also in devising ways for the local community to play a more active role in the direction and activities of the Trust.

Please encourage friends and family to sign up (and take up the opportunity to volunteer if they wish), which can now be done quickly and easily through our website www.railwaylandproject.org/membership



left: Helen and volunteer Jane McIntosh, at the RLWT membership stall providing craft activities at the 'Every Sort of People' Festival held at the Dripping Pan in May.

above: the JMB volunteers and their guest Kaddie Lee Preston open the original Leighside Pond bridge designed by Christy Cairns in 2008.

to contact the Railway Land Wildlife Trust &
Programme Coordinator

Helen Meade

Email: coordinator@railwaylandproject.org
(Helen also deals with bookings & membership)

RLWT

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www.railwaylandproject.org

and click on 'About' / Newsletters

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:Newsletter published by

Railway Land Wildlife Trust

Registered Charity No 800655

Registered Company No: 02313579

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www.railwaylandlive.org

printed by Elephant Print, Barcombe

www.elephantprint.co.uk