

RAILWAY LAND WILDLIFE TRUST



May 2019

Edition No. 98

www.railwaylandproject.org

Registered Charity No. 800655

'Looking Out' Festival - June 9th 2-5pm

The heart of this year's festival is an anonymous art auction, masterminded by local artist Susie Monnington. This is an invitation to artists of all ages and skills to donate anonymously a card 6 by 6 inches of their favourite view looking out from Lewes or the river Ouse, or the Downs. We want to attract work by professional artists, school children and anyone who is inspired by the theme to create a piece of art. Bids will be placed on all cards and then the 10 – 15 cards that have attracted the highest bids will be put up for auction by Harvey's Master Brewer, Miles Jenner. This will take place just after 4pm on 9th June and the artist for each card will only be revealed once a final bid has been accepted. Punters could pick up a bargain!

The proceeds will go to supporting the Trust's educational work with young people of all ages. This includes the work of the inspirational youth group from Priors and Ringmer secondary schools - the RATS (Raising Awareness of Tides and Sea Levels); and this year at 3pm they will launch their specially designed bookmark on flood risk to go into libraries and schools in Lewes District as well as a video made in conjunction with the Environment Agency.

The free Festival will include stalls showcasing local organisations who are all 'looking out' for the environment in some way. Stalls include Brighton and Lewes Beekeepers, the East Sussex Wildlife Rescue and Ambulance Service, Sussex Wildlife Trust, Vert Woods, Wildflower Lewes, Tingles Way, Egrets Way, the Lewes Printmakers and more. There will be short but very interesting guided walks, a children's art group run by Lewes artist and printmaker Kirsten Norbury of ArtStart, live music by Aftershave and tea and cakes until they run out!

Drop off or post your art cards, anytime to either: Linklater Pavilion, Railway Lane, Lewes. BN7 2FG OR Dairy Studio, Old Malling Farm, Lewes. BN7 2DY

Please ensure they are 6 inches by 6 inches, with your name on the back.

Deadline for card donations is noon Saturday 8 June.

Do bring your family and friends for what we hope will be a hugely enjoyable and varied afternoon.

Huge thanks to John Parry for taking the lead on running the festival this year, and to Susie Monnington for driving forward the anonymous art auction.

OUR STRATEGIC AIM 2 - get more local people **involved with the Trust**

LEWES RAILWAY LAND WILDLIFE TRUST

Looking Out

LOOKING OUT FROM LEWES – LOOKING OUT FOR NATURE
SUNDAY 9TH JUNE FROM 2PM TO 5PM

SUMMER FESTIVAL

Music, Refreshments, Family activities, Guided Walks

4pm Anonymous Art Postcard Auction

At the Railway Land Local Nature Reserve and the Linklater Pavilion
FREE!

EVENT PARTNERS AND SPONSORS:

FIND MORE INFORMATION ON HOW WE BRING NATURE TO THE HEART OF LEWES AT:
www.railwaylandproject.org

Community Extravaganza and Jolly Room

OUR STRATEGIC AIM 4 - improve our **infrastructure** and resources



Our Community Extravaganza in March was a storming success! The afternoon got off to a stirring start with the Undercroft being renamed the Jolly Room in memory of Alison Jolly, whose legacy donation was used in part to fund the new floor.

There was then a hubbub of volunteer led activity: one walk headed down towards the water meadows to look at the water systems on the reserve, how they interact and the importance of the role they play in maintaining the biodiversity of the site; another walk set off into the woodland to search for invertebrates; and the Jolly Room hosted the first outing for our chalk aquifer model, the revamped flow tank and all manner of nature based arts and crafts.



It was wonderful to see the new look Jolly Room so bright and full of life. It was an enormous team effort by scores of volunteers to clear out, sort out, clean up, redecorate and reorganise the room – which is now so much more welcoming and useable – so very many thanks to all involved!



Top: The Jolly family cut the ribbon.
You can access John Parry's opening speech on the website at: <https://www.railwaylandproject.org/madagascar>

Leonie examines a minibeast, Mary demonstrates the new aquifer model and Milly supervises the revamped flow tank.
Below: family exploration of the water meadow ditches.



Wellbeing in Nature

This project continues to thrive. It provides much needed support to people who are struggling with their mental health by giving them a safe and welcoming place to come and, of course, the opportunity to benefit from being in the natural world. The participants of the Wellbeing in Nature are very much becoming part of the fabric of life in the Linklater Pavilion and on the Railway Land. They have taken on the care of the rather neglected Pollination Station, are growing wildflowers from seed for plug planting, and are preparing a multi-faceted display for the Looking Out festival on June 9th.

Working alongside the Wellbeing group is Kristy Allen, who is our current Writer in Residence while she completes her MA in Creative Writing. Below is the poem 'I Am Spring', which was inspired by the group looking for signs of spring on the Railway Land and Kristy collecting words and phrases in which they imagined themselves to be spring.

I am spring.
My waking is sudden – a surprise.
Renewed now, ready to get up,
I rise, pushing life
from the earth and quickening
the heartbeats of birds
and crawling things.

I am spring.
For half the year I've lain in the dark
sodden earth, encased in rich soil,
waiting. Waiting for the sun
to sprout my bulbs and make birds
frisky in my bushes.

I am spring.
My energy comes in bursts,
sending wild
gusting winds
one
day,
sunshine and birdsong the next.
Before staggering, I fall
back
to
sleep
on the cold damp ground.
Till I wake up
and try again.

I am spring.
Dangling, closed up, in drops of rain.
Running into puddles and the mud.
I am the dirty river eddying
where the mullet crowd.

Spring: my colours are coming!
Yellow, green, blue,
lighter greys and brighter whites –
the colours of a great tit.

I am spring,
slowly emerging and gently noticing.
Reflective, now becoming hopeful
I can make it. Yes.



Expanding, stretching, reaching, journeying upwards to the sky.

I am spring!
I shout my song to the next generation.
Spring – fill up your lungs, here's so much life!
I am catkins in their vest of pollen,
the robin gathering soft twigs on the bank.
Come down to the cuttings
and you may see spawn!
I am spring.
I am spring on the Railway Land.



For more information about the Wellbeing in Nature group, contact Ellie Moulton at wellbeing@railwaylandproject.org

OUR STRATEGIC AIMS 2 & 3 - get more local people **involved** with the Trust

- provide **inspirational** and **innovative** learning activities and events

Holiday Clubs

Our Holiday Clubs will be running again this summer! The clubs were a huge success last year.

Led by experienced staff, children explored, played, lit fires, used tools, made toys, conducted scientific surveys, ran, hid, swung from trees and saw all manner of wildlife.

The children had great fun, which is one of the main aims of the holiday clubs – they aren't school! - but just as importantly participants are led a little deeper into knowing and caring about nature, and our beautiful reserve in particular, so they will become adults who will take action to protect it.

Holiday clubs run from 9am – 4pm. You can book for either 2 days or 4 days, and this year's dates are:

28 May - 31 May 29 July - 1 August 5 August - 8 August 28 Oct - 29 Oct

Places are limited!

For more information and to book, please visit our website at <https://www.railwaylandproject.org/holiday-club>



*Exploring, observing,
tracking, climbing !*



FUND RAISING NEWS

Lewes Ripple

Lewes Ripple had its inaugural weekend over the May bank holiday. A not-for-profit event, the Ripple is a coming together of musical talent in Lewes showcasing all sorts of genres and raising money for local causes. We were very lucky to be the beneficiaries of the Saturday night gig at the Con Club, with music by Sepia Shadows and Blacklight. This was a cracking night, combining an eclectic mix of music, cinematic visuals and bonhomie.



It's a Ripple right now but with a fair wind there are plans to expand the concept to embrace a three-day town-wide event in 2020. This would include the classical community, ancient and modern folk and choral groups of all sizes. Young musicians in particular would benefit from an event on this scale. More info on the Lewes Ripple website: <https://www.lewesripple.uk/>

Cycle ride

It's not too late to join our team of cyclists riding in the Greater Brighton Cycle Challenge on May 19th – or to sponsor them! Helen Meade, Jenny Lindop and John Parry have been limbering up in preparation and would welcome more riders.



The ride is a celebration of the wonderful and diverse landscape of the Brighton and Lewes Downs Biosphere area – otherwise known as the Living Coast. Organised by Brighton Housing Trust, this year local organisations have the opportunity to raise money by taking part, and as partners in the Living Coast it seemed very fitting for us to participate. We are raising money for our Wellbeing in Nature project.

There are three rides available of 15, 30 and 60 miles. All rides start at Preston Park Velodrome, which is where the 30 and 60 mile rides also end. The 15 mile ride has been arranged especially for us and ends in Lewes. For more info contact Helen at coordinator@railwaylandproject.org. **To sponsor us please visit our Go Fund Me page at:** <https://www.gofundme.com> and search for Wellbeing in Nature.

Helen Meade and Jenny Lindop in serious training!



Vote for us with your green Waitrose counters in May!

The Trust is one of Waitrose's Community Matters charities in May..... you can ask for counters at the checkout and pop them in the voting boxes on your way out of the shop.

Response to the Climate Change Youth strikes by Dr John Parry

One of my more challenging requests recently was being asked to give an Assembly to most of the classes at Western Road Primary school including a good turn-out of parents as well as teachers about climate change on 15th March strike day.

I could see so many pitfalls from scaring young people to talking over their heads that I decided to focus on just 3 aspects.

The first was to emphasise the need for us to work together and, with reference to Roger Hart's ladder of participation, to point out the dangers of manipulation, decoration and tokenism at the bottom rungs of his ladder to the ideal top rung participation of 'youth-initiated, shared decisions with adults' which is something that I built into the Railway Land education from the very start.

The second aspect was a focus on sea level rise and the impact this will have on the lower Ouse valley using a digital fly-through showing various sea levels as a result of the Environment Agency's Coastal Communities 2150 European project on which I was invited to serve.

The final aspect was to highlight the success of Project 468, now in its third year and involving all the Lewes Primary Schools, Iford and Kingston Primary and Priory Secondary school. I ended the Assembly by suggesting that Project 468 could be both the core and a stimulus to a collaborative and more coherent, joined-up, local approach to environmental education in Lewes – to my delight and relief, the audience and Headmaster, Matthew Montebello, responded enthusiastically.

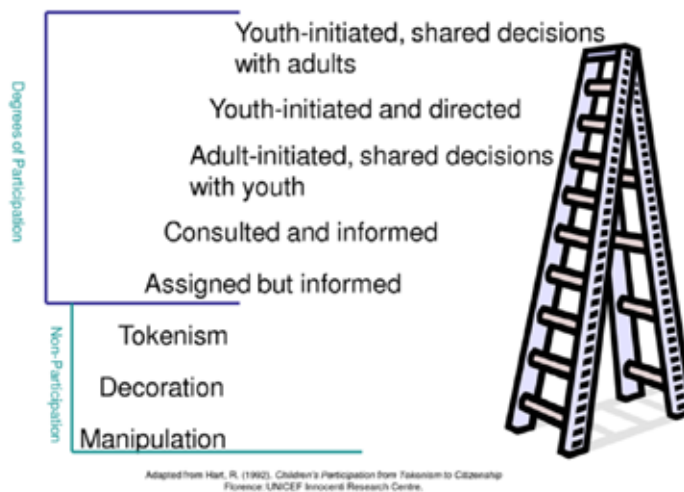
On Monday 18th March I met with Tony Smith, Headmaster of Priory and outlined an approach which he backed and, following an invitation to share this with Lewes Mayor, Janet Baah, on 19th March, a tentative plan started to emerge including securing a keynote by Headteacher Richard Dunne at an INSET day for Lewes teachers on 6th November.

His Primary schools' 'Harmony' curriculum has recently been launched. Events moved swiftly and with the Mayor's enthusiastic help as well as Town Hall staff, a **family climate change curriculum consultation** was held at the Town Hall on 15th April - exactly a month after the Western Road Assembly.

Why this moved so quickly was that following a meeting at the start of the strikes with one of the strike co-ordinating students at Sussex University, I was anxious to provide my support not simply by marching but by offering an albeit limited and very local strategy to environmental education generally as well as the focus on climate change.

I was therefore pleased that the response from both the students union and my own School of Education and Social Work at Sussex was such that they will support a series of consultations and workshops involving young people, teachers and parents.

Ladder of Youth Participation



The aim is to secure a more co-ordinated approach to environmental education and actions with and by the young people of Lewes which was precisely the reason for setting up the RLWT and constructing a building fit for the purpose.

We have given ourselves a year to try and put all this in place but without adding stress to an already very stretched education system.

My hope is that the following aims will help relieve such pressures by:

- sharing aspects between schools of a coherent local environmental education programme.
- exploring how place-based environmental education and boundary crossing theory could support the above.
- holding an annual joint meeting of school pupils to share experiences.
- identifying bodies and inputs that could provide out-of-school supplementary programmes as required.

Finally, on a wider canvas, I would hope the Lewes strategy might provide a model for other communities and that the process will identify preferred curriculum content that is not possible under current school legislation but which is felt to be necessary to prepare our young people for the environmental challenges ahead.

Dr John Parry, Senior Teaching Fellow, School of Education and Social Work, University of Sussex.

OUR STRATEGIC AIM 3 - provide inspirational and innovative learning activities and events

The Majesty of the Willow Tree

Kim Dawson, LDC & EBC Specialist Advisor (Downland & Reserves)

It is hard to remember the bare bones of the winter now that the Reserve is awash with all the beautifully rich hues of green, purple, pink, white and yellow. Now well ensconced in Spring, and looking forward to the Summer months, it's an absolutely boundless time of the year. Trees unfurl gems of green leaves. Multi-coloured blossoms including the May or Hawthorn are in full flourish, alongside the nettles shooting sky high. Look out for the beautifully delicate white jewels on the garlic mustard! All are key to supporting food and refuge for the myriad of insects, birds, bats and mammals found on the Reserve. Birds are most definitely in full swing of nesting, with some, including robins, tits and mallards, already successfully fledging a first brood in some cases. Keep your eyes peeled for the fluffy youngsters constantly calling for 'mum and dad' to feed them.



Our Reserve is an isolated island of 'life', and this is a call for all wildlife enthusiasts to aid the Reserve by realising the value of your own gardens in providing natural corridors which connect up the Lewes 'islands'.

Encouraging natural and bountiful plant life in your gardens with a bias towards native and less ornamental style habitats, will not only capture carbon and help to cleanse the air, but will also provide for biodiversity.

Work across the Reserve continues with the steps into the sidings repaired by the ever-so-talented and hardy Sunday volunteer group – the Meadow Minders, who worked tirelessly in rain and wind to finish them. The Meadow Minders meet on the first Sunday of the month from 1.30 pm for an afternoon of making, doing and just simply enjoying the Reserve. All ages, abilities and walks of life



are most welcome, and so do please come along if you are free and feel the need for some Railway Land natural and practical enrichment – we are a very relaxed and friendly bunch.

The cattle are also back on the water meadows providing us with their outstanding and ever-so-effective conservation grazing service, which helps to keep the more vigorous grasses and plants down, so that other more delicate species have the chance to shine through.

We are excitedly getting ready for the 9th June Railway Land Wildlife Trust 'Looking Out' Festival with another special guest appearance from our good friend 'Agent Amphibian'.

During the strong winds a month or so back, one of the large majestic willow limbs, located within the bamboo circle, sadly succumbed to Storm Gareth.



Willows are an absolutely incredible specimen of tree. They have a stalwart determination to survive and grow, with their remarkable roots readily sprouting from aerial parts of the plant, and / or broken and fallen seemingly dead or destroyed limbs. Mostly associated with water and wetter soils, the willows on the Reserve really shape the setting, being closely associated with the River Ouse

flood plain, providing us with not only beauty and grandeur, but also feeding and housing countless wildlife. They are early flowering and so crucial for bridging the food gap until most of the other trees and plants are out in bloom. They also provide us with cool and shady spots to sit under on scorching summer days, and, in my humble opinion are just a majesty to behold. That all being said – I'll 'leave' you with a snippet from Antoine de Saint-Exupéry - The Wisdom of the Sands – "The tree is more than a first seed, then a stem, then a living trunk, and then dead timber. The tree is a slow, enduring force straining to win the sky."

Dawn Chorus Walk and Whisper: 11th May at 4am!

Steve Homewood, Chris Roach and Jenny Lindop led an enthusiastic group of sixteen on a most successful walk.

The rain held off, a hearty breakfast was consumed & £215 was raised for Trust funds.

Pat Rigg



To contact the Railway Land Wildlife Trust & Programme Coordinator

Helen Meade

Email: coordinator@railwaylandproject.org

**Linklater Pavilion
Railway Lane, Lewes
BN72FG**

**Tel: 01273-477101
(answerphone only)**

for bookings and membership

Ruth Collens

Email: admin@railwaylandproject.org

for school visits and holiday clubs

Milly Hawkins

Email: education@railwaylandproject.org

to contact Lewes District Council Specialist

Advisors

Kim Dawson & Thyone Outram

**Tel: 01273-471600
m 243343 07917**

Kim.Dawson@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk

for access to past newsletters

www.railwaylandproject.org

and click on 'About' / Newsletters

Editor: Pat Rigg

contact via :info@railwaylandproject.org

photos ©RLWT unless attributed

Newsletter published by Railway Land Wildlife Trust

Registered Charity No 800655

Registered Company No: 02313579

<https://www.railwaylandproject.org>

to access archive webcams

<https://www.railwaylandlive.org>

printed by Elephant Print, Barcombe

<https://www.elephantprint.co.uk>