



# NEWSLETTER

AUTUMN 2020

## **Hello from Ruth O’Keeffe – Chair of Friends of Lewes**

Michael Chartier has stepped down as our Chairman due to the constraints the coronavirus lockdown barriers had on the running of Friends of Lewes.

In the interregnum, as Vice Chair, I have been asked to step up and assist as Chair of the Friends. I look forward to working with the Executive Committee and the wider membership to do whatever we can with the challenges the ‘new’ normal presents to us and keep on track in following all the Friends of Lewes goals (more news about the 2020 goals further on in this newsletter).

## **Lewes Heritage Open Days from Judith Davies**

This year, instead of the traditional September Heritage Open Days weekend, the Friends of Lewes launched three free leaflets for self-guided walks around the town. These allow visitors to explore the historic, architectural and environmental aspects of Lewes at their own pace, and because they are self-guided, the walks can be taken at any time of year.

### **The three walks leaflets are:**

**Town nature walk** This is packed with information on the trees and flowers you can see as you walk around the town at any time of the year. The Friends of Lewes is also organising a competition for Lewes families to design their own nature trails around their gardens or in surrounding streets: see elsewhere in this newsletter for details

**Local architects walk** This walk, through the Pells and the Wallands, takes in buildings by local architects from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Samuel Denman and Rowland Halls, together with more modern houses by practices such as John Schwerdt and BBM.

**A walk along the High Street** This stroll between Cliffe Bridge and the bottle-neck to the West will let you admire the varied architecture and its historical associations, whilst exploring some of the many independent shops along the route.

All three leaflets are available now from the Tourist Information Centre and the Town Hall and can also be downloaded from [www.friends-of-lewes.org.uk/hod2020/](http://www.friends-of-lewes.org.uk/hod2020/). They were designed and compiled by members of the Friends of Lewes, and sponsored by Adams & Remers, Gorringes auctioneers and Lewes District Council.



Next September, we hope to resume our traditional Heritage Open Days programme of local buildings opening up to the public for a weekend. Planning for this starts in February: involving seeking sponsorship, deciding which buildings to open and finding new ones, and recruiting volunteer stewards. Planning meetings are usually held monthly, and we are looking for volunteers to join the team. If you have an interest in the town's heritage together with experience of fund-raising and PR or IT and design skills, please get in touch with us by emailing [leweshod@gmail.com](mailto:leweshod@gmail.com).

### **Keeping Members in the 'Loop' from Jane Slater**

At the beginning of the Pandemic, when we were first in lockdown and housebound, as a new Trustee, I offered to ring up all of our Members to see if they would like help in any way. I managed to speak to most of you and those who were unavailable I left a message.

I must say that everybody seemed to be managing and some were getting help from good neighbours. Many were enjoying the time to read, take up a hobby or keep fit. Everyone's said their garden was the best kept it had ever been! I suggested as I rang round that we could keep Friends of Lewes Members in isolation up-to-date on events in Lewes by having a monthly Zoom coffee morning. No one needed to go out and about but could sit in their own house with a cup of Coffee and have Lewes news brought to them.

The first Zoom Coffee Morning was in June of this year and we have had one every month since. We started our first meeting with about 20 members attending and had two very

good speakers, Geraldine Cortese who told us about the local drive to provide NHS Scrubs and Tom Crossett who told us all about the pandemic in Lewes District. Other very interesting speakers have taken part in the following months and I would like to thank them all for brightening up our lives and keeping us updated with life in Lewes.

### **July**

Audrey Jarvis - Work on the Friends of Lewes -Trees Sub Committee  
Sheila O'Sullivan - Cycle Lewes  
Kevin Moore - The Lewes Living Street Group

### **August**

Councillor John Lamb - Mayor Lewes Town  
Sy Morse-Brown - Chairman of Lewes Priory Trust

### **September**

David Hutchinson - Heritage Open Days  
Juliet Oxborrow - Lewes Climate Hub

Please do join us at our next Zoom Coffee morning to be held on *Tuesday 20th October at 10.15* when the speaker will be **Vivian Yule** who will talk about **Wildflower Lewes** and our very own Chair of Friends of Lewes, **Ruth O'Keefe**, MBE who will describe her new role as Chair and **Civic matters** in **Lewes**.

All Members will be sent the Link by our Membership Secretary, **Paul Mockford**, to the next Zoom Coffee Morning so we look forward to seeing you all then. If you have any suggestions for future subjects you would like us to cover please do get in touch.

Jane Slater [janeslater09@gmail.com](mailto:janeslater09@gmail.com)



## **Progress towards our 2020 goals**

The Friends of Lewes Trustees continue to engage, albeit via unusual communications channels, with policy makers at national, regional and local levels to enhance the environment and commercial sustainability of the town. Audrey Jarvis and the Trees Committee's report follows as does an update regarding the radical changes in the Planning System.

In lieu of the Societies Fair this year our Chair put up a two-week display in the Tourist Information Office which includes Friends of Lewes material in together with a number of other groups and societies.

## Planning Committee Update from Chris Kneale

The Government is currently consulting on radical changes to the planning system in the White Paper 'Planning for the Future'.

The current system dates back to 1947 and although it has evolved over time it has become complex and introduced uncertainty and delay into the system. Current proposals for development must meet policy requirements set out in National Planning Policy Guidance and in Local and Neighbourhood Plans ie The South Downs National Park Plan & The Lewes Neighbourhood Plan. Planning decisions are discretionary rather than rule based which leads to a significant number of appeals. Developing Local Plans takes an average of 7 years meaning many policies become quickly out of date. Change is therefore overdue.

The Government proposes to reform the planning system by streamlining and modernising the planning process, bring a new focus to design and sustainability, improve the system of developer contributions to infrastructure, and ensure more land is available for development where it is needed.

Local plans will be two thirds shorter and must be completed within 30 months. They will replace the current lengthy documents and the library of evidence-based documents that sit behind them. The successful introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework in 2012 has demonstrated that concise policy documents can help making decision-making more efficient. The role of Local Plans will be simplified to focus on designating land under 3 categories - *Growth areas* suitable for substantial development; *Renewal areas* suitable for some development; and *Protected areas* such as National Parks and Conservation Areas where development is restricted, and historic buildings protected. A major change is that local plans will set clear rules for development rather than general policies. Plans will no longer contain a long list of "policies"; just a core set of standards, design guidance and codes, which will set the rules for the design of new development based on community involvement.

A radical, digital-first approach is proposed to modernise the planning application and consultation process which will move from a process based on documents to a map-based process driven by data.

There will be a new focus on sustainability to ensure the planning system addresses climate change mitigation and adaptation and facilitate environmental improvements. This includes ambitious improvements in the energy efficiency standards for buildings to help deliver the commitment to net-zero by 2050.

Infrastructure delivery will be improved through a reform of developer contributions. A new nationally-determined, binding housing requirement that local planning authorities would have to deliver through their Local Plans will also be introduced.

Much of this is welcome but as always, the devil will be in the detail. The Government's proposals will take time to put in place properly, require the development of new digital systems and is dependent on having sufficient professional planning resources within local planning authorities. The consultation runs until 29 October.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-the-future>

## Trees Committee Update from Audrey Jarvis

As you may imagine, the main challenge for the Trees Committee this Summer has been the long periods of drought. Thanks to lots of support from the resident “custodians” of the trees we have planted, it looks as many of them are thriving. We are keeping a close watch on two trees at Cross Way which have needed extra care, such as mulching and pruning, because a rare case of vandalism had already put them under stress. We will need to wait until the Spring to find out whether they need replacing or not. A special thank you to Trees Committee member Matthew Stuart, of Bonny’s Wood, for taking his bowser around all the trees which we had planted over the past two years and giving them a good long drink!



*Crab Apples on Malus Rudolph planted at the top of Middle Way*

One of the trees which we planted in Prince Edwards Road last November, a Hawthorn, had started the year well and produced some beautiful blossom but, after the blossom had finished, it began to develop brown leaves. Testing by Keith Sacre, another member of our Trees Committee, confirmed that it had a case of “Fire Blight”. In the short term it has been cut down to the level of healthy growth and we are very grateful to Barcham’s Nurseries for offering to replace the tree with three new trees, free of charge. The resident custodian has chosen to have a Whitebeam to replace the Hawthorn, and we aim to plant it this Autumn.



*Berries on the Swedish Whitebeam in South Downs Road*

Trees Committee member Chris Bibb, Specialist Adviser for Lewes District Council, has led two site meetings over the Summer months in our quest to find new sites where we might plant trees in Lewes. At Lewes Cemetery we identified places, mostly around the perimeter, where we could plant 27 trees. We also hope to establish wildlife hedges of native trees in three places in the Cemetery, leaving gaps to allow access. Because sightings of two rare bees, the Brown-banded Carder Bee, (*Bombus humilis*), and the Long-horned Nomad Bee, (*Nomada hirtipes*), were recorded at Lewes Cemetery early in June 2020, our choices of trees will focus particularly on those that might help bees and other pollinators to flourish.

We also explored Jubilee Gardens, (off Juggs Road), where we hope to plant a hedge of mixed native trees along the fence line and possible three larger trees. The Trees Committee have agreed to prioritise these projects for Autumn 2020 as being the most manageable with continuing social distancing guidelines.

We continue to share daily posts showing Lewes trees on our Facebook page, Lewes Urban Arboretum, and on Twitter @LewesUrban. You may contact us via [arboretum@friends-of-lewes.org.uk](mailto:arboretum@friends-of-lewes.org.uk)

## **Friends of Lewes Family Competition September 2020**

Can you design a nature trail around your street, your garden or another space in Lewes? Friends of Lewes are organising a family competition linked to their leaflet: “Lewes Heritage – A Town Nature Walk” which results from a collaboration between Lewes Urban Arboretum, (Trees Committee of Friends of Lewes), and Wildflower Lewes.

To share in our celebration of the natural environment of Lewes, we are inviting you to create your own “Nature Walk”. For example, it could be a hand-drawn map of your neighbourhood, illustrated with your drawings or photographs of the trees, wildflowers or other wildlife you have seen there. To respect social distancing, we are asking entrants to photograph their entries and send them to [arboretum@friends-of-lewes.org.uk](mailto:arboretum@friends-of-lewes.org.uk) with your name and contact details. By entering, we will assume that you are giving permission for Friends of Lewes to share your entries on social media but please let us know if you would prefer us not to show your name. The competition is open to individuals or groups of any age and prizes of £15 book tokens will be awarded to three of the lucky entrants. The deadline for sending in your entries is October 31<sup>st</sup> 2020.

Have fun!



## Help wanted

The pandemic is turning our thoughts to what our “new normal” might be, and that could well include putting our talks online. If you could help in any way with this, such as learning Zoom skills, do please get in touch via [enquiries@friends-of-lewes.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@friends-of-lewes.org.uk).

## Events

We have delayed the start of the Friends of Lewes winter talks series due to Covid-19, but are currently planning these talks, which are likely to take place on Zoom starting in the new year.

Also, of interest are:

Lewes Priory Trust – via Zoom ([Details and registration](#))

Friday 2 October 2020	Christopher Whittick	Robert Crowham – last Prior of Lewes
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Lewes History Group – Zoom Webinar ([Details and registration](#))

Monday 12 October 2020	David Scott Cowan	Rowland Hawke Halls: Sussex Architect
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Roland Hawke Halls’ work is featured on the Lewes Heritage *Local Architects walk* leaflet.