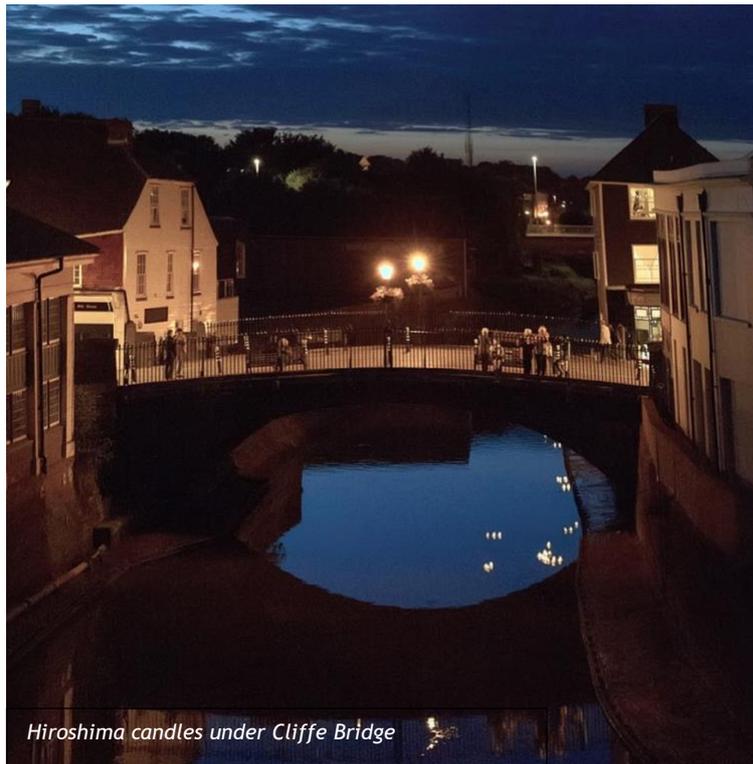




NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2021



Hiroshima candles under Cliffe Bridge

Picture by Nick Robinson

Ruth O’Keeffe - Chair of Friends of Lewes

Welcome to the Friends of Lewes Autumn Newsletter 2021.

At the time of going to press with this newsletter there were real signs of hope that things might be on the way back to a new normal, something closer to all the social events and meetings we all took for granted before the pandemic. Hopefully by the time you read this, things will be better still.

Friends of Lewes have continued to work towards the goals which have proved so successful in carrying us purposefully through some very difficult times, and in this newsletter, you will find all sorts of updates on actions taken and planned, together with information about our town.

The newsletter starts with planning matters; a planning update with items about the conversion of the Crown Inn in the centre of town, and the continuing trend for retail spaces to become residential ones, notably at the top of the high street, news about the castle wall and the newly opened debate about the north street quarter, now looking likely to become “The Phoenix Project. The progress of the Garden Street judicial review is something you may well not yet know about, and you can find all the details in the newsletter.

The Trees Committee has been busy as always and you will find news of their projects and of their many collaborations with other groups in the town including all of the Lewes Nature Mosaic groups; one of the most recent that may feature in a later newsletter being work with the Rotary Club of Lewes in the tree planting plan mentioned for the Wallands area.

The upcoming Lewes Heritage Open Days will be happening 10th-12th September this year and all the details are in the newsletter.

One of the new features of keeping in touch with you as members are the Coffee Time Talks, born out of the need to see people online rather than in person and continuing on into the Autumn this year by popular request.

At the end of the newsletter, you will find a helpful list of upcoming events from the Lewes History Group that we think will be of interest.

I will conclude this short introduction with thanks to all of the contributors, Chris, Peter, Roger, Audrey and Jane and to Diana for her work as editor, and commend your latest newsletter to you.

All good wishes

Ruth

Planning Update from Chris Kneale

The Crown Inn

It has been a welcome sight to see the completed restoration of the 17th century Grade II* listed Crown Inn which had deteriorated to such a dilapidated state following years of decay and lack of maintenance.

We were therefore delighted to accept an invitation from local Lewes developers Stephen and Carolyn Sparks of Sparks Properties to tour the recently completed redevelopment. Stephen explained that they had worked with the Lewes Conservation Officer to retain and restore as many of the remaining period features as possible. The renovation has been extremely thorough using the same materials originally used in its construction and details such as the windows have been restored using the original designs. Peter Earl and Chris Kneale enjoyed hearing about and seeing the extensive work that has been undertaken to restore the building and were very impressed at their resolve to take on such a challenging project. The building now provides 9 high end apartments with commercial space on the ground floor.

As a member of Friends of Lewes, Stephen plans to give each new apartment owner a tree as a welcome gift, which will be planted in Lewes by the Trees Committee of the Friends of Lewes. Further details of the project can be found at <https://www.sparksproperty.co.uk/the-crown/>



Shop to Residential conversions

Anyone who has lived in Lewes for a while will have noticed that areas such as the upper High Street have changed as shops close due to the lack of demand for retail space. Many of these retail spaces have been converted to residential use or are being considered for conversion.

A new Friends of Lewes Planning Advice Note 'Retail to Residential' has recently been published which sets out the key principles the Society believes are necessary to maintain the quality of design within Lewes. The Advice Note is aimed at local planning authorities, property owners, developers and architects. Further details can be found on our web site.

<https://friends-of-lewes.org.uk/resources/friends-of-lewes-planning-guiding-principles/retail-to-residential-friends-of-lewes-planning-advice-note-april-2021/>



Castle Wall Update *from Peter Earl*

The County Council have reached agreement with Cheesmur Contractors to carry out the reinstatement works to the section of the Castle wall that collapsed in November 2019. This follows the grant of ancient monument consent. Cheesmur Contractors were involved in the reactive works to clear the debris following the collapse and have experience in working with historical structures. The County Council are also employing the services of Morton Partnership as their design specialist.

The long-awaited reinstatement work is due to commence on Monday 16th August 2021 with the contractors setting out their site compound within the Maltings Car Park and Peace Garden. Their site entrance will be through a gate to the private residential garden providing a dedicated access throughout. The programme aims to complete works by the end of November 2021, although this will be very dependent on the weather. There are contingency plans for covered heated working areas if required. The aim being to complete all works this year rather than in a less desirable two stage approach.

The North Street Quarter *from Roger Maskew*

This item for the Autumn Newsletter is based on two references, the first being the “Phoenix Project July Newsletter” issued by Human Nature on the 14th July 2021 and the invitation to the “Phoenix Project Design Festival” issued on the 06th August 2021.

The ‘key points’ are as follows: -

1. As previously mentioned in the Spring Newsletter, Human Nature are now using the ‘working title’ of **The Phoenix Project** for this proposed development.
2. Human Nature have now appointed their design team and have been developing their ideas for this site in preparation for the “Phoenix Project Design Festival” to be held on site during the weekend of Friday the 10th until Sunday 12th September 2021.
3. Indeed, “the Foundry Gallery, which was built for Every’s Iron and Steel Works in the early nineteenth century and supplied the ironwork for Brighton Pier and Lewes Station, will be at the heart of the Phoenix Project Design Festival”.
4. Four members of the Friends of Lewes Executive Committee had a ‘zoom’ meeting with Human Nature on the 30th June 2021, when it became apparent that ‘The Phoenix Project’ was going to be a significantly different proposal to the previous scheme for this site, which would include the retention and reuse of a number of the existing buildings in addition to the Foundry Gallery.
5. More specifically, in the August Newsletter Human Nature explained that “Over the past year we’ve been working on plans for a new walkable, renewably- powered, super-green neighbourhood on the former Phoenix industrial in Lewes”.
6. Following the Design Festival, further work in progressing the scheme will be undertaken by the design team prior to the submission of a planning application, with the objective of seeking to secure a planning permission by the end of 2022.

FoL members are encouraged to visit the design festival between the 10th to 12th September in order to meet the design team and to engage in discussion about Human Nature’s proposals for this important site in Lewes.

Both the FoL Executive and Planning Committees will be interested to see how Human Nature’s overall proposals for this important site will integrate with the existing urban fabric of the town in terms of making a valuable contribution to the wider townscape context of Lewes.

Garden Street Judicial Review update *from Peter Earl.*

Members will recall that in December 2018 planning consent was sought for a housing development on the disused auction gallery site in Garden Street, near Lewes Station. When Lewes was a market town, this was the site of Lewes Fatstock Market, visited on a weekly basis by most farmers in the local area. As a brown-field site in the heart of the town it is an obvious choice for much-needed residential development with an option to create affordable homes for young Lewesians and key workers. Apart from its historic value, the site holds an important position in the townscape and requires a development of high quality to enhance Lewes' Conservation Area. The planning application for the site proposed 10 residential units but argued that affordable housing was undeliverable because of the cost of the design requirements of the site.

The particular design of the development was not considered by many in the town to be an acceptable solution and a poor-quality design, that would have a negative impact upon its surroundings as well as failing to deliver the affordable housing so urgently needed.

Lewes Town Council, Tanners Brook Resident's Association, The Friends of Lewes and the Lewes Conservation Area Advisory Group (LCAAG) all recommended that the Application be refused by the South Downs National Park Authority's Planning Committee. This they duly did, although against the officer recommendation. The proposed development was considered unacceptable by virtue of its mass, scale, bulk, design and materials. Extensive glazing would appear incongruous and overly dominant within the street scene, and in other important views, and as such would harm rather than preserve or enhance the special architectural or historic interest, character and appearance of the Lewes Conservation Area, and would be in conflict with policies of the South Downs Local Plan. The incongruous and unacceptable design, with significant construction costs associated with it, were considered to have eroded the viability of the development to provide policy compliant affordable homes.

The applicant then submitted an appeal against the refusal of planning permission. This appeal took place without the knowledge of local residents and local amenity groups including LCAAG and the Friends of Lewes denying the opportunity for passing further comment on material planning considerations. The subsequent Inspector's decision to allow the appeal, meant that this extremely inappropriate development could proceed with its negative implications for the townscape and its residents in terms of the absence of affordable housing.

The Lewes Conservation Area Advisory Group challenged the decision of the Planning Inspector, which can only be undertaken through a Judicial Review. Whilst it was considered the necessary legal notification of the appeal to local residents and amenity groups had not been undertaken, the judge considering the matter, determined that formal written notification had taken place and that the Claimant (LCAAG) had no locus to complain that others, not party to the proceedings, were not informed. It was also considered that the need to be consulted only relates to those who have made "written" representations to the Planning Authority and not to those who made oral representations at any Planning Committee meeting.

In terms of the second ground relating to the Inspector's assessment of the evidence and the conclusions that he reached, these were all considered matters of planning judgement for the specialist Inspector and not matters for the court to review or to substitute its decision for that of the Inspector. The court considered that decision of the Inspector must be looked at as a whole, and need only explain the reasons for his decision, not determine each and every point, argument or representation made, or what weight to give to competing arguments.

In consequence, the Judicial Review challenge was dismissed, which means that the planning permission can now be implemented and the site, which was identified in the Lewes Neighbourhood Plan for affordable housing, has been lost for that purpose. The award of cost claim by the court against LCAAG is being challenged and the outcome awaited.

Trees Committee Update *from Audrey Jarvis*

Once all our tree-planting and hedge projects were completed, by late Spring, the Trees Committee were able to focus on tree maintenance: weeding, mulching, and pruning the 73 street trees we have planted around Lewes. Over the next few weeks, we will be attending to all the hedges at Lewes Cemetery, Bell Lane, and Jubilee Gardens. They have grown a great deal with all the rain we have had but some of the undergrowth needs to be removed to give them a better chance of establishing themselves.

After several working parties and discussions by email, the Trees Committee were at last able to meet outdoors in person in July to firm up our ambitious plan of planting 40 new trees in Autumn 2021 in the Wallands area: to fill the spaces left by felled trees lost to disease or old age over the past decades and not replaced. The funding for this comes from a Sussex Community Trust Grant, donations from residents and proceeds from LDC Local Lottery players who have chosen Lewes Urban Arboretum as their “good cause”.

Mature examples of some of the trees which we are planning to plant: Ginkgo biloba in Abinger Place; Autumn colour of Liquidambar in Prince Edwards Road; Hop Hornbeam in King Henry’s Road



A few months ago, the Trees Committee responded to children from local primary schools involved in the Green United “Big Ask”, a collection of ideas from children about how to respond to the climate crisis through positive action on or near their school grounds. Some of the suggestions were for “more trees and hedges” so we are keen to help in any way that we can! We have recently had a site meeting with children and staff of Western Road and Southover Schools to help them to plan for planting hedgerows around the perimeter of their school field and we look forward to supporting them with the planting later in the year!

Through our collaboration over the past year with Lewes Nature Mosaic, (Lewes Urban Arboretum, Wildflower Lewes, Common Cause, and the Railway Land Wildlife Trust), we have at last found a suitable site for a tree and wildflower nursery in Lewes! It is a lovely site in Malling with water available and we plan to start work on the infrastructure in September so that we are ready to start growing in 2022. We will be using the space to plant locally sourced tree and wildflower seeds for specific Lewes sites.

We are still interested in hearing about any land that is available for tree or hedge planting. If you have any good ideas, please contact us by email: arboretum@friends-of-lewes.org.uk

If you would like to support our tree-planting plans, you may choose Lewes Urban Arboretum as your “good cause” in the LDC Local Lottery:

<https://www.leweslocallottery.co.uk/support/friends-of-lewes>

Progress towards our 2021 goals

On Thursday 22nd July, Lewes Swift Supporters (LSS) installed 3 new Swift nest boxes at the homes of 3 of their Supporters who live in the Swift “hot-spots” of De Montfort Road and Western Road. This is part of the LSS project to expand existing Swift colonies by providing nest spaces to compensate for those nooks and crannies under eaves that have been lost through demolition, development, or renovation.

In line with their goal of **“improving our environment, increasing biodiversity and mitigating the results of climate change by collaborating with other Lewes-based groups with such aims”**, Friends of Lewes were pleased to be able to partly fund the purchase and installation of the 25 boxes which have been installed by LSS since October 2020.

Lewes Swift Supporters have also advised several other residents so that they may confidently purchase and install their own Swift nest boxes. If you are thinking about installing one ready for next year, you may contact them via lewesswifts@gmail.com or visit their website: <https://e-voice.org.uk/lewesswiftsupporters/>

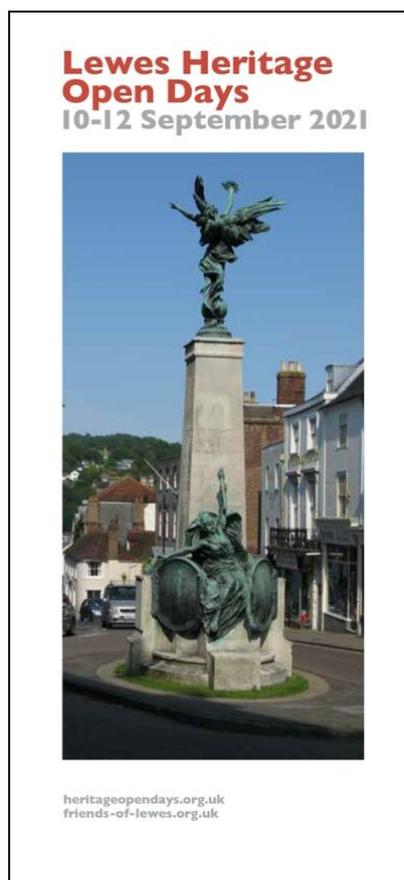


Photographs of some of the nest boxes installed on Western Road and De Montfort Road in July 2021

Heritage Open Days 2021

After a break, due to the pandemic, Lewes Heritage Open Days weekend returns this year with a programme of building openings and guided walks in the town. The event, which is organised by the Friends of Lewes, runs from Friday 10th to Sunday 12th September. It's part of the national Heritage Open Days programme (10th to 19th September) which embraces a host of events across the country, as well as the local area including Newhaven, Seaford and the surrounding rural district.

The Lewes event will offer free access to 13 different buildings which are not normally open to the public. These embrace a range of historic periods and styles in a variety of uses. Included is the Grade I listed Jireh Chapel and the former council offices in Fisher Street which have just been converted to The Werks creative work and meeting spaces. The programme has five different bookable walks in addition, the Baxter's Field open space has embraced the national Heritage Open Days theme of 'Edible England' by providing samples of autumn fruits and berries, and tours to learn about edible and poisonous plants.



A leaflet should now be available from the Lewes Tourist Information Centre, Seaford Tourist information Centre and Newhaven Fort, as well as businesses and other places around Lewes.

You can also find full details on the FoL website: friends-of-lewes.org.uk/hod2021/ or heritageopendays.org.uk. Both these websites include Eventbrite links to reserve places on the walks. These must be booked in advance.

There are also seven different popular self-guided walk leaflets which can be enjoyed at any time at your own pace, again available at Lewes Tourist Information Centre: -

*A Walk along the High Street
A Town Nature Walk
Local Architects Walk
The Tom Paine Trail;
Lewes Public Art Trail
Priory History Trail
Battlefield Walk*

The Friends of Lewes Heritage Open Days Committee that put the event together are hugely grateful to the owners of all the venues who have come forward to make the event possible and to the sponsors for their support.

from Peter Earl, Chair of Friends of Lewes Heritage Open Days

Keeping you in the 'Loop'

Friends of Lewes Civic Society has through our regular Coffee Time Talks tried to keep our Members informed about events taking place locally and has tried to cover the wide range of Members interests.

The Friends of Lewes has an established programme of evening talks, which are currently delivered via Zoom. We welcome members of the public to these talks, in addition to our members. Talk details are shown on our website at friends-of-lewes.org.uk/diary/

However, during the pandemic, we have introduced five Zoom Coffee Time Talks over the year, which are free to all Members. We still believe it to be a useful way of keeping us all up-to-date. Our aim in the future is to continue to provide this opportunity to meet up with friends from the comfort of your own home. You provide the coffee - we provide a stimulating talk and an opportunity to ask the speaker questions.

These Coffee Time Talks are freely available to the Members of the Friends of Lewes. If you would like to join in and attend our talks you can find details on our Membership page on the website and we will send you a Zoom link a few days before each talk.

If any of you would like to tell the Members about your favourite hobby or have a suggestion for an interesting speaker for our Talks, please do get in touch with our Membership Secretary Diana via email: enquiries@friends-of-lewes.org.uk

Look out for some exciting Coffee Time Talks in the future months.

from Jane Slater, Friends of Lewes Trustee

Coffee Time Talk dates for September to December 2021 all starting at 10.30 am Future Speakers

Tuesday 7th September- Implications of Climate Change

Ruth O'Keefe - In her talk about Climate Change Through Geological Eras, Ruth will explain why the West Midlands has so much red sandstone, amongst other curiosities.

Carola Godman Irvine, a local farmer, will tell us if Climate Change has an impact on the farming community.

Tuesday 19th October

Marcus Taylor - My time as a Mastermind Contestant

Marcus Taylor, history graduate and now a retired teacher, tells how it was he came (rather to his surprise and his wife's alarm) to appear on BBC Tv's Mastermind programme 35 years ago with a special subject about which not a lot is known.

Marcus is the Chair of The Friends of Lewes Membership Services Subcommittee.

Tuesday 14th December

Ewa Burman, a brilliant home cook, will explain the wonderful food that is cooked to celebrate Christmas in Poland and demonstrate her recipes.

Events

Friday-Sunday 12-15 September 2019

[Heritage Open Days](#) – A range of historic buildings in Lewes will be open to the public, plus walks and guided tours (which need to be booked).

The Lewes History Group Zoom talks scheduled between now and November are:

Monday 13 September 2021, 7:30pm

Will Pilfold: The Ouse Valley's Pits: using chalk and making landscapes

Monday 11 October 2021, 7:30pm

Debby Matthews: The Life & Times of Thomas Mantell: A true Lewes maverick

Monday 8 November 2021, 7:30pm

Mary Norris: The War Memorials of St John-sub-Castro Church, Lewes

VOLUNTARY DONATION

We depend largely on our members' subscriptions to carry out our work, and welcome additional help from donations and legacies of any amount, however small.