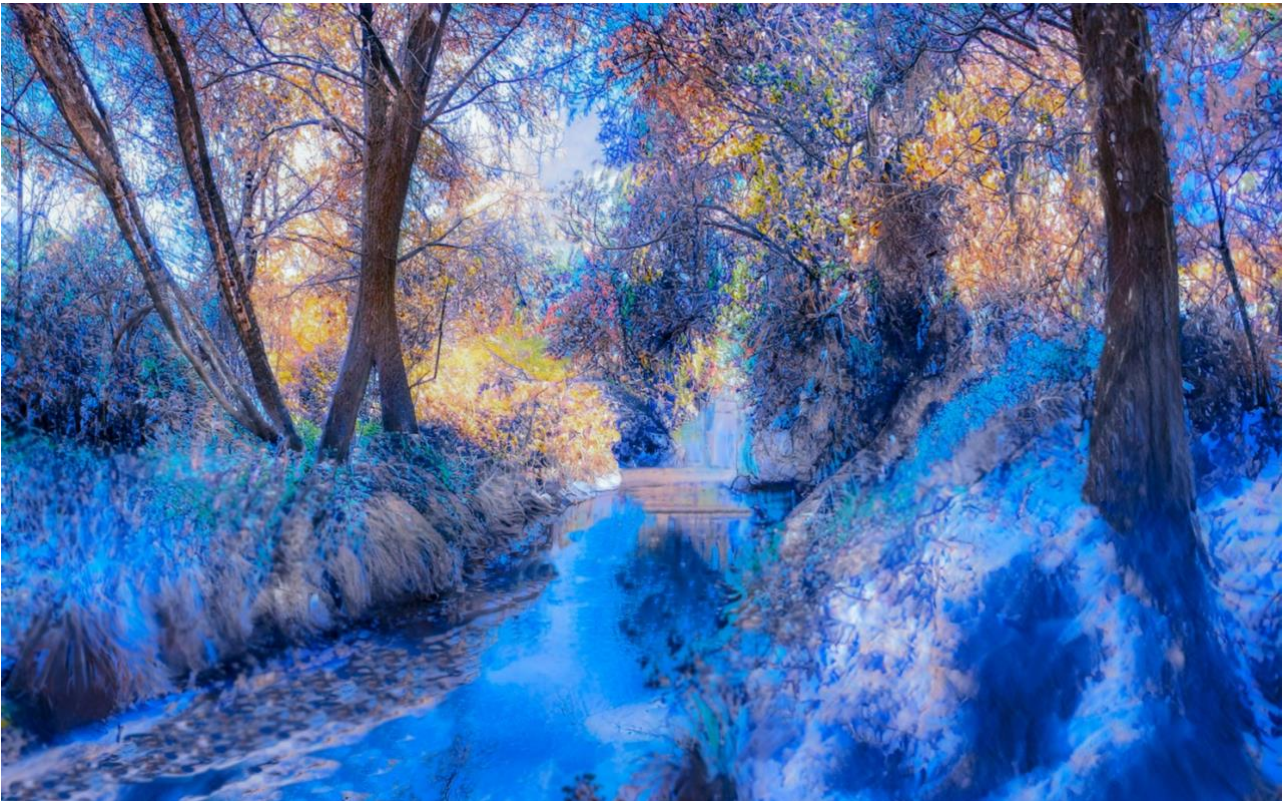




NEWSLETTER

Winter 2022



Snow on the Railwayland - picture by Nick Robinson

Ruth O Keeffe - Chair of Friends of Lewes

Welcome to the Friends of Lewes Winter Newsletter 2022

Recently I was privileged to be asked to speak about Friends of Lewes at a conference being held in Lewes, and it was an unexpected pleasure to be invited to speak to the Eastbourne branch of the National Federation of Occupational Pensioners on the same topic in January, by someone who had heard me speak. Having not heard of the NFOP I have been interested to discover it has about 50,000 members. It will be good to share what we do in Lewes with a wider audience, and it is great to know that people would like to hear about FoL. I will do my best to do us justice!

In keeping with the season, this edition of the newsletter has gift ideas and events to come to as well as articles as food for thought.

Have you thought of a gift membership of FoL for a family member or friend? See below on page 3 for details, and how to buy books from FoL or Lewes History Group for a present with a local theme.

Next up, a planning update from Roger Maskew on pages 4-6 including the terms of reference for the committee, and a description of the work carried out; please get in touch with Diana Freestone our secretary via enquiries@friends-of-lewes.org.uk if this inspires you to want to offer your assistance in this very valuable work.

Peter Earl shares the news about the Lewes Bus Station on pages 7-8 and explains about FoL's work concerning building and enforcement issues across the town.

The trees committee have been as busy as ever, and Audrey Jarvis has an excellent set of pictures to go with her text on pages 9-10.

Heritage Open Days 2023 theme has just been announced as 'creativity unwrapped' and Peter Earl has all the details on page 11 including diary dates; in Lewes this will be 8th-10th September next year.

I was really pleased to be able to attend the completion ceremony for the St Thomas à Beckett Church Tower repairs, with Barbara Merchant, Diana Freestone and Audrey Jarvis from FoL.; we are all pictured on page 12 with Cllr Shirley Sains, Mayor of Lewes and Peter Varlow who has done so much to make sure all the repairs took place. Another opportunity to get involved on page 12, the newly refurbished turret clock at St Thomas à Beckett needs winding daily and more team members are still needed.

Jane Slater has been busy arranging the next series of Coffee Time Talks and Diana Wilkins (our very own Membership Secretary) will have as her theme the 1921 census from which there is a lot of recently released information. See page 13-14 for details from Jane, and a final note on page 14 about donations to support FoL's work.

It only remains for me to wish you all a Happy Christmas season and a peaceful New Year.

All good wishes

Ruth

Christmas Gift ideas from the Friends of Lewes

Are you looking for Christmas gift ideas? For something different this year, why not consider one of the offers below from the Friends of Lewes and Lewes History Group.



Gift membership of Friends of Lewes

Do you know someone who might like a Gift membership for Friends of Lewes? Simply send a cheque for the relevant membership fee to FoL's Membership Secretary, 1a The Lynchets, Lewes BN7 2BL to arrive no later than 15 December and we will email you a Gift voucher which you can print off or forward to your recipient. Membership costs - Individual £12 pa, Joint £17 pa, Life £120, Joint Life £170. See our website for more details <https://friends-of-lewes.org.uk/membership/>

Friends of Lewes publications

Popular books such as *Street Names of Lewes* or *Inns of Lewes* are available at a discount for FoL members, plus postage and packing charges are waived for members' orders during December. All the details are on <https://friends-of-lewes.org.uk/resources/publications/>

New books on Lewes Street Histories: Mill Road, and Chapel Hill

The Lewes History Group has published two new books by its members: *Mill Road, South Malling*, by Chris Taylor, and *Lewes Street Stories: Chapel Hill* written by Mary Benjamin, Meg Griffiths and Shân Rose. These are available from the Tourist Information Centre for £7.50, and by mail order via <https://leweshistory.org.uk/publications/>

THE PLANNING COMMITTEE *from Roger Maskew*

The Planning Committee is a sub-committee of the Executive Committee and the **terms of reference** includes the following: -

“The purpose of the Committee is to assist the Executive Committee in its endeavours to protect and enhance the townscape and architectural, visual and historic interest of Lewes and the surrounding area, and preserve access to the latter.”

The duties of the Committee are: -

- (a) To consider major planning developments affecting the town of Lewes and to make recommendations to the Executive Committee on appropriate action.
- (b) To study all other planning applications within Lewes or having a bearing on Lewes and to submit comments where necessary to the Local Planning Authority.
- (c) To undertake such other tasks as may from time to time be determined by the Executive Committee.”

The committee is comprised of members of the Friends of Lewes who have a wide range of experience within the building and planning processes.

Monthly Meetings: -

The Committee meets on a monthly basis to examine all of the planning applications recently submitted within Lewes or having a bearing on Lewes. During the pandemic all of these meetings were conducted by “zoom” but “face to face” meetings, (with the option of “zoom”), have recently been reinstated.

In order to be able to undertake this work, a compilation of recent planning applications is prepared from planning applications received and validated by the South Downs Park Planning Authority (SDNPA), and issued to the Committee in advance of the meeting.

As an example of the type of work involved, at the meeting of the Committee at the beginning of November, the Committee had a total of 29 planning applications to consider, which involved each of the Committee members having to examine every application on the SDNPA’s website in Midhurst, with many of the applications having a large number of documents to consider.

For each application members of the committee look at the scale and massing of the development in relation to its neighbours, the quality of design, the impact on the streetscape and how rain water run-off is dealt with. For development in the Conservation Areas particular attention is paid to ensuring that the materials used are appropriate and reflect those traditionally used and where necessary ensure that the design proposals are historically accurate.

Following these investigations, each of the Committee members was asked to submit a shortlist of schemes for discussion at the meeting. This resulted in 16 planning applications being discussed at the meeting with a total of 11 of these planning applications requiring either objections or other comments being submitted to the SDNPA as the relevant Planning Authority.

The Planning Committee sends all planning applications to the Trees Committee of Friends of Lewes so that they can consider, and where appropriate comment on, planning applications including tree works within the town of Lewes and its immediate surrounding area.

In addition, the Planning Committee links actively with The Aquifer Partnership (TAP) in support of their Raingarden Campaign which aims to reduce surface water flooding in urban areas.

Planning Consultations: -

As part of its remit, the Planning Committee responds, as necessary, to a variety of planning related consultations affecting Lewes, which previously have included: -

The South Downs National Park Local Plan proposals, which have now been adopted.

The Lewes Neighbourhood Plan, which has also now been adopted.

The draft SDNPA Design Code, (currently being revised), for the assessment of new developments.

The current SDNPA “Brooks Road Planning Brief” consultation.

Planning Design Guidance: -

The Planning Committee has drafted a number of documents on a range of subjects as detailed below: -

- Shop Fronts in Lewes: Friends of Lewes Planning Advice Note: September 2016
- Garden Rooms: Friends of Lewes Planning Advice Note: March 2017
- Dormer Windows: Friends of Lewes Planning Advice Note: March 2017
- Retail to Residential: Friends of Lewes Planning Advice Note: April 2021

The advice is taken into account in the determination of current Planning Applications.

Significant Developments in Lewes: -

The Planning Committee in liaison with the Executive Committee endeavour to monitor and to comment at the appropriate time on the progress of these schemes, which have recently included:-

1. The **Malling Farm Development**, which has recently been granted outline planning permission.
2. The recent **Lewes Bus Station Proposals**, which resulted in the Friends of Lewes submitting an ‘Objection’ to the Generator Group’s Planning Application, which was subsequently rejected by the SDNPA’s Planning Committee at their meeting on the 08th September.
3. Proposals for **The North Street Quarter**, which are currently being progressed as the **Phoenix Project** by Human Nature, with a planning application now being anticipated towards the end of January 2023.

Joining the Planning Committee:

Following the retirement of two long standing members of the committee, the committee would welcome applications from members of the Friends of Lewes who would wish to consider joining the committee and adding their expertise to the group.

Anyone interested should initially contact Di Wilkins the Membership Secretary at membership@friends-of-lewes.org.uk

Roger Maskew: Acting Chair of the Planning Committee.

Monday 21st November 2022.

Planning Update *from Roger Maskew*

Since the Autumn Newsletter issued in September 2022 there have been two further meetings of the Planning Committee at the beginning of October and November, when a total of 44 applications were considered and comments made to the relevant planning authority on 18 submissions.

The most significant planning decision since the Autumn Newsletter was circulated was made at the 08th September meeting of the SDNPA's Planning Committee in Midhurst, when the application by the Generator Group to redevelop the Lewes Bus Station was refused. (Please refer to the separate Bus Station item by Peter Earl).

As a result of this decision there is a continuing dialogue between the SDNPA, (as the planning authority), ESCC, (as the highway authority), the Generator Group, (as the developer of the bus station) and other adjacent land owners such as Human Nature, (owner of the North Street Quarter site) and the John Lewis Partnership, (as the owner of both the Waitrose supermarket site and the adjacent disused Wenban Smith site), in order to investigate possible options for providing suitable future bus services for Lewes.

The other significant site of interest is the North Street Quarter, where proposals for its redevelopment are currently being progressed. (Please refer to the separate North Street Quarter item).

The North Street Quarter *from Roger Maskew*

As mentioned in the last Newsletter, a meeting with Human Nature that had been arranged for early September, but had to be postponed as the SDNPA planners had requested "more detailed information on one parcel" of the proposed development, which would require more time to prepare. This time period also clashed with 'key' members of Human Nature's staff taking annual leave.

Subsequently, another meeting with Human Nature had been anticipated for mid-October, but this meeting was eventually arranged for Tuesday 08th November. Unfortunately, this meeting had to be cancelled due to other commitments on 'key' members of Human Nature's staff.

A meeting has now been arranged with Human Nature for early December, when we will be brought up to date with the latest redevelopment proposals for the Phoenix Project.

In this respect we have already been advised that it is still Human Nature's intention to submit a 'Planning Application' to the South Downs National Park Authority, as the relevant planning authority, before the end of January 2023.

It is understood that this 'Planning Application' will comprise the following elements: -

1. An 'Outline Planning Application' for the entire Phoenix Project site.
2. A 'Detailed Planning Application' for the proposed flood defences.
3. A 'Detailed Planning Application' for one 'parcel' of the proposed development, illustrating how the proposed 'Building Codes' for the development will be implemented.

Following the planned meeting with Human Nature in the near future, the Society will be better informed on progress on this project.

Furthermore, when the 'Planning Application' is actually submitted, (currently anticipated before the end of January 2023), the proposals for the site will be in the public

Lewes bus station update from Peter Earl



Members will be aware that the privately owned Lewes bus station interchange and garage has been the subject of a planning application for its demolition and redevelopment to residential and commercial uses. The Friends of Lewes was one of many groups who opposed the development because no replacement bus station was to be provided and because the scale and design of the new development was overbearing and incongruous, and did not conserve the character of the Conservation Area or the setting of nearby Listed Buildings.

Following the refusal of the planning application by the South Downs National Park Authority on 8th September the Generator Group (as applicants and owners of the site) have until 7th March 2023 to decide if they are going to lodge an appeal to the Secretary of State to review the decision, and possibly overturn the refusal.

In the meantime, the Generator Group have stated that they, 'are looking at our options for the commercial future of the site, including the potential for alternative revenue generating uses which regrettably necessitates securing vacant possession of the property.' (This is why they have terminated the use of the bus station by the various bus companies and its use by Zu café and others of the building). They go on to say, 'We will of course continue to engage with the relevant stakeholders and communicate with residents and stakeholders while ESCC progresses its proposals for the transition of bus services from the site to a suitable, long-term location.'

There remains a strong need for a permanent bus interchange facility for the existing services that use it, and the many tourist coaches that visit the town throughout the year. As things stand no better site than the current position has been identified and no plan for either its continued use or an acceptable deliverable alternative has been put forward. There is no reason why the existing facility should not continue, with the redevelopment of the former bus garage for affordable housing. This aligns with the current planning policy in both the South Downs Local Plan and the Lewes Neighbourhood Plan. If necessary, the County Council could use its powers of compulsory purchase to achieve this utilising Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds that would be collected from any redevelopment of this and other town centre sites.

The County Council have confirmed 'that the current bus station performs a vital function, in that it allows those who utilise the buses to wait, board and alight in a safe and comfortable environment. It also allows them to do so in a location that is easily accessible to much of the town centre's retail, leisure and premises that serve as important community services and facilities. It is therefore a facility that plays a hugely important role in encouraging and promoting use of sustainable travel in and around Lewes. The bus station also allows for buses to stop and set-down in a location off the highway, thereby not inhibiting the flow of traffic on roads within its locality (i.e., Phoenix Causeway, Eastgate Street, East Street)'. The County Council have just been allocated over £41million as part of the Bus Service Improvement Plan which included funds for a Lewes mobility hub together with new services and improvements to others, in addition to the current 1600 services a week.

East Sussex County Council have confirmed that the temporary High Street bus stops will remain after bonfire night on Sunday 6th November. They 'are shortly looking to make some additional changes to the bus stops at the bottom of School Hill by widening the pavement and installing bus shelters on the widened sections. Again, these will continue to be temporary measures until such time that a permanent bus facility is provided. It is also likely that the temporary bus lay-over facility in Little East Street will be returned to parking bays and we will advertise/advise residents beforehand'. No designs have been made available to date and whilst the provision of shelters and seating is to be welcomed this can only be a temporary fix. It is currently unclear how the County Councils works take account of their location within the designated conservation area adjacent to several listed buildings, which brings with it various legal duties.

The need for a bus interchange remains but it is unclear how the developers or the County Council intend to meet their respective obligations. Watch this space and support the campaigns for the delivery of a permanent bus interchange.

Keeping an eye on the town *from Peter Earl*

The Friends of Lewes Planning Committee view all planning applications, listed building and conservation area consent, including tree works applications. Comments on the applications are made to South Downs National Park as the planning authority. These comments are taken into account in the consideration of the applications by officers, and where appropriate the Planning Committee. The Lewes Conservation Area Management Plan acknowledges that the Friends of Lewes have a particularly distinguished record of influence and practical action within the town, dating back to 1952. It is acknowledged that Lewes is well served by the enthusiasm of its inhabitants for its preservation and protection and that organisations like the Friends of Lewes have a critical role to play by alerting public authorities of relevant issues in the town.

To respond to this role the Friends of Lewes in conjunction with the Lewes Conservation Area Advisory Group (CAAG), maintain a spreadsheet of building and enforcement issues. These are regularly drawn to the attention of officers at the South Downs National Park and their colleagues at Lewes District Council who operate on an agency basis on most planning matters across the town. In addition to highlighting any identified breaches of planning control, the spreadsheet highlights any buildings in poor condition, or considered at risk, to ensure the avoidance of any further deterioration and damage. This emphasises the importance of regular building maintenance and that once any valuable architectural features are lost it can be difficult to recreate them. The Society, with members of CAAG, meet officers on a regular basis to progress cases and identify priority cases. At the present time there are some 50 cases across the town where a need for action has been identified or where the condition of buildings are being monitored.

Trees Committee Update from Audrey Jarvis

Our tree planting season has begun! We started a little later than usual because the trees were not delivered until mid-November because they had not yet lost their leaves and entered their dormant phase. We had a splendid day on Sunday 20th November for our first working party in Malling, where we planted twelve more street trees altogether.

In Fitzgerald Road, we planted three *Sorbus intermedia* Brouwers, (Whitebeam), and two *Alnus incana*, (Alder), on the corner of the green. On the nearby verge we planted a *Cercis siliquastrum*, (Judas tree), and an *Amelanchier lamarckii*, (Juneberry), either side of an existing Cherry.



Fitzgerald Road green



Fitzgerald Road verge

Around the corner in Queen's Road, we planted a *Liriodendron tulipifera*, (Tulip tree), which is huge! Then, moving on to Barn Road, we planted an *Acer campestre* Lienco, (Field Maple), a *Malus baccata* "Street Parade", (Crab Apple), and a *Pyrus calleryana* Chanticleer, (Ornamental Pear).



Queen's Road



Barn Road

Last of all, we went to Prince Charles Road to plant an Ulmus “Homestead”, (Elm). This was a late addition to our tree planting programme, stimulated by the sad news that the marvellous Elm which used to grow there had been felled.

This brings the total number of street trees we have planted in Lewes to 135, and you can see where we have planted them on the map on the Friends of Lewes website: <https://friends-of-lewes.org.uk/natural-environment/lewes-urban-arboretum/>



Prince Charles Road

It was lovely to receive so many positive comments from the residents as we worked! We have 33 more trees to plant this season – so look out for news of them in the next newsletter! We are very grateful to Lewes District Council and ESCC, who generously included us in their successful bid for a grant from the Local Authority Treescapes Fund. This will pay for 20 of the 45 trees this year, and 20 more in 2023 and 2024.

Heritage Open Days from Peter Earl

The 2023 theme for Heritage Open Days has just been announced by the national organisers. The theme is 'Creativity unwrapped'

Next year organisers of local Heritage Open Days festivals are being encouraged to unwrap the colourful history of creativity and artistic expression, encompassing art, architecture, cinema, crafts, dance, drama, literature, music, oral tradition, visual arts, and more. This can involve identifying who the designers were behind particular buildings, a park or garden. Finding out if Lewes has been immortalised in a song, painting or film. Obviously, the theme can take many directions and hopefully we will be able to share some relevant stories that members have.



So, during the seasonal break please give this some thought and help bring something new to the event. As always, we are always looking to open new and different venues and have different tours or walks during the Lewes Heritage Open Days festival. If you have a home, office, or other building, garden you would like to see as part of the festival please get in contact with the organising committee via the Friends of Lewes secretary.

The date for the 2023 Lewes Heritage Open Days festival is Friday 8th to Sunday 10th September. Key 2023 dates are:-

- Early March – Registration opens
- Mid March – Planning & Inspiration webinar
- June – Event directory goes live
- August – Registration closes
- **8-17 September – THE NATIONAL FESTIVAL!**

Friends of Lewes support St Thomas à Becket Church Tower repairs

The first stroke of twelve noon on Friday 25 November 2022 signified the re-starting of the ancient tower clock of St Thomas à Becket Church in Cliffe. It had been out of action for a year while work took place to make the church tower's 15th-century spiral staircase safe, enabling the daily rewinding of the clock to resume.

Nearly £25,000 was raised for the repairs, from many people in Lewes, and organisations such as The Friends of Lewes and Lewes Town Council.

If you would like to join a volunteer team to wind the turret clock every day, please contact parochial church council member Peter Varlow, peter@varlow.org.uk



Barbara Merchant, Sally-Anne Sains -Major of Lewes, Diana Freestone, Audrey Jarvis with Peter Varlow of St Thomas's Church and Ruth O'Keeffe - Chair of the Friends of Lewes

Keeping you in the 'Loop' from Jane Slater

One of the Friends of Lewes Civic Society Goals is to increase our engagement with the local community. During the past year we have continued to hold a series Coffee Time Talks to keep our members informed and up to date. By sending out Zoom Links to our Members we are able to keep us all 'in the Loop'. These Coffee Time Talks are freely available to the Members of the Friends of Lewes.

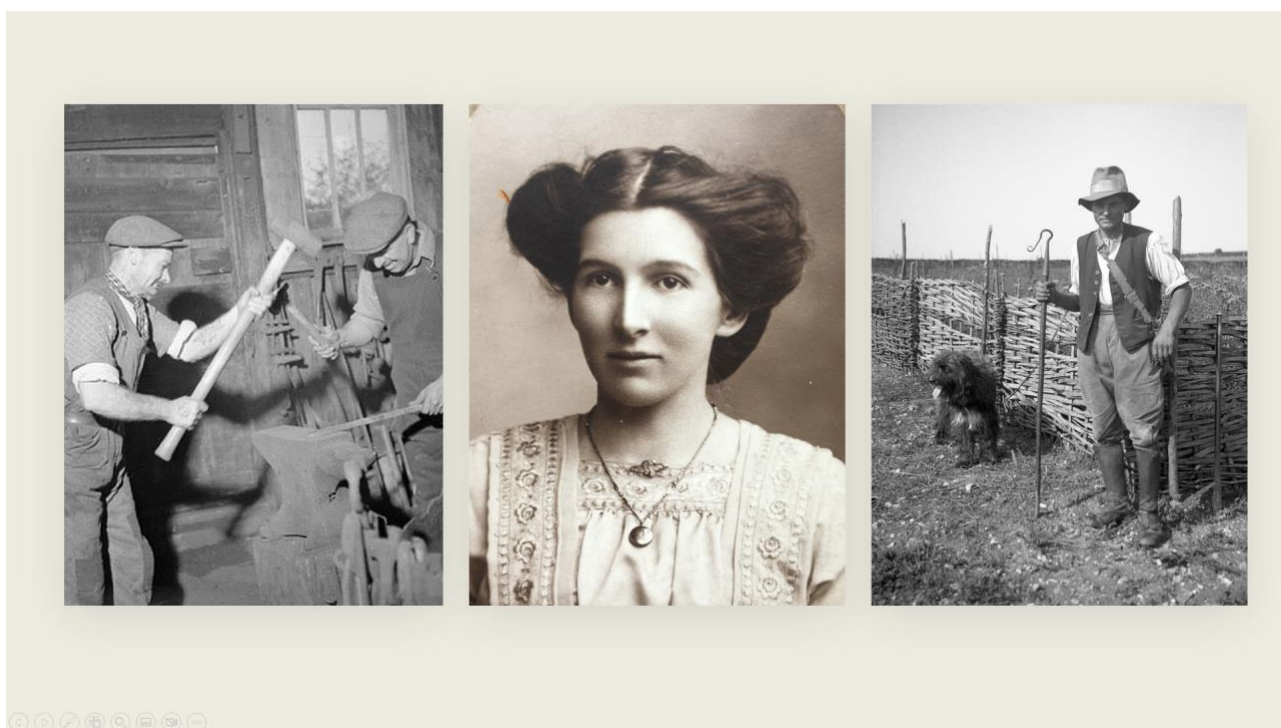
If you would like to join in and attend our talks you can find details on our Membership page on the website and we will send you a Zoom link a few days before each talk. More information is available from the membership secretary, Diana Wilkins, via email - membership@friends-of-lewes.org.uk

Friends of Lewes Coffee Time Talks to be held by Zoom in 2023

During 2022 we held six Coffee Time Talks during the year. We are now proposing that in 2023 we will be asking experts to give us an insight into their special subject to keep us updated on activities going on in the area of Lewes. We have allocated the following dates to hold the Talks - so please do save these dates in your diary for next year:
January 10 /March 14 /May 16/July 11 /September19/ December 5

To our **Guest Speakers** who have kindly given up their time to entertain and enlighten us over the past year we give our many thanks. If you would like to see any of the talks again many of them are available on the internet and if would like to see it any of the talks again, please do please let us know.

Our next Coffee Time Talk is planned for Tuesday 6th December when Diana Wilkins, our Membership Secretary, who will look at easy ways to find out how your ancestors lived and worked using recently released information from the 1921 census.



Diana will give top tips on how to:

- Find your family in the census
- Explore the history of an area or an institution
- Find information for free

All members will be sent a Link to your email address prior to the Coffee Time Talks.

On the day of the event, you just click on the Zoom link and you will be fascinated to hear our guest speakers. Our Talks are usually held on a Tuesday from 10.30am and we aim to hold 6 or so a year. You will also be given the chance to ask our speakers questions.

I very much look forward to seeing you at our future Talks

Bring your own coffee and we will provide some interesting speakers to keep us up to date with the latest events in Lewes!

Best wishes

Jane Slater

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.

You can also support Friends of Lewes by participating the Lewes District Council Local Lottery at:
<https://www.leweslocallottery.co.uk/support/friends-of-lewes>