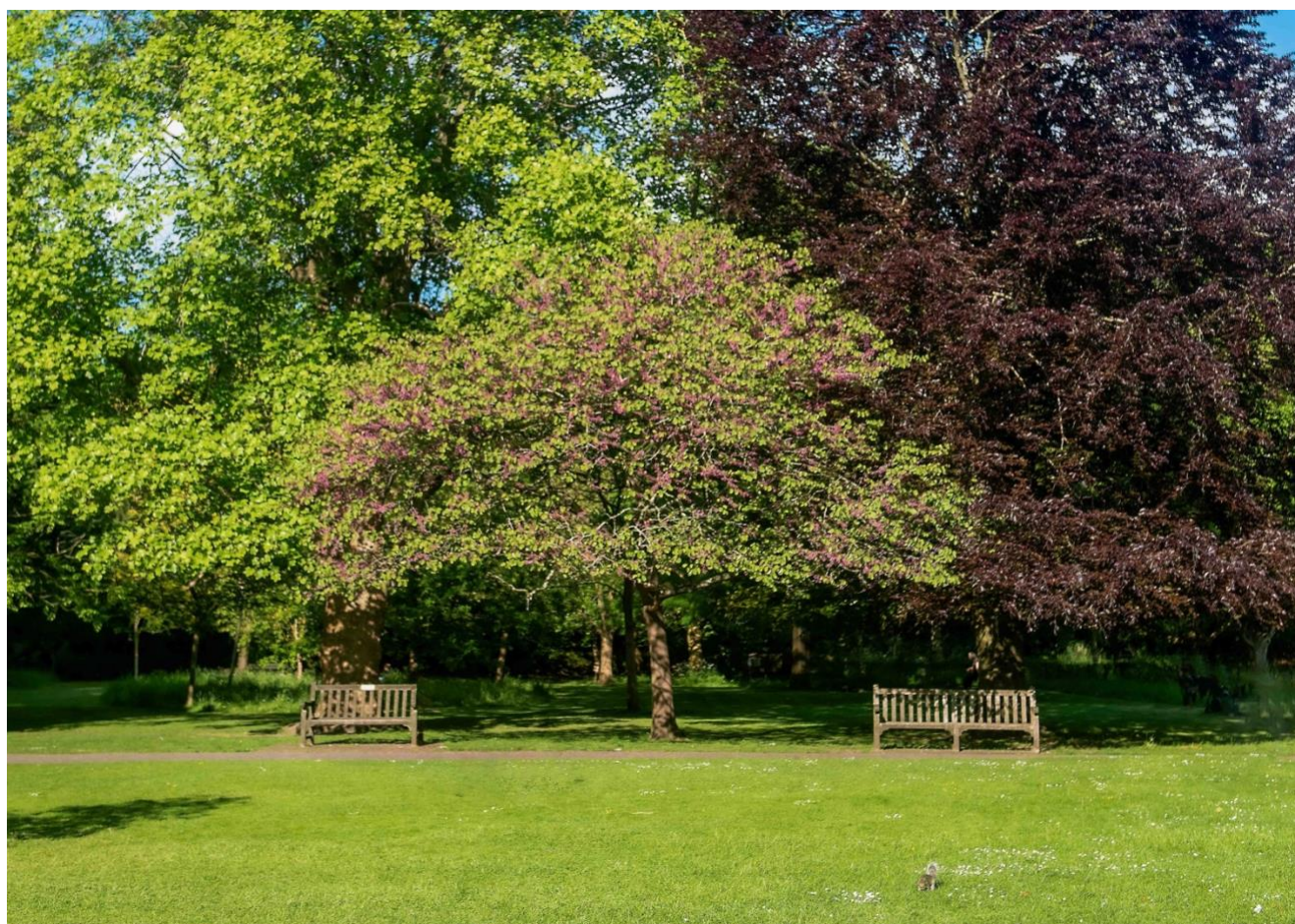




NEWSLETTER

SPRING/SUMMER 2022



Picture of the Judas Tree in The Grange Gardens by Nick Robinson

Welcome to the Spring/Summer Newsletter from Ruth O'Keeffe - Chair of Friends of Lewes

Dear Member of the Friends of Lewes

At the time of writing, I have just returned from the Southover Open Gardens event, always a joy but this year even more so as people emerge from all of the lockdowns of the last couple of years, and with lovely weather making it even more special.

One of the things that makes Lewes such a strong and well-connected community is the number of events of this nature and it was great to see so many people including Friends of Lewes members out and about discovering or re-acquainting themselves with the garden treasures of Southover.

Southover Grange Gardens where Nick Robinson photographed the Judas tree for the cover of this edition was one of the many possible stops on the garden trail as were the Priory Trust's Herb and Kitchen gardens.

This newsletter starts with details of two new co-opted trustees for Friends of Lewes, Diana Wilkins who has joined us as the new membership secretary, and Stephen Catlin whom many will remember as a recent Past Mayor; read on for many interesting facts about them both on pages 3 & 4.

Roger Maskew's Planning Update follows, with details of the Friends of Lewes Planning Committee responses to the Wenban Smith and Bus Station applications on page 4 followed by a longer section dedicated to the North Street/Phoenix application, listing the specific concerns at present, and letting readers know on page 5 about the planning application which should be imminent.

Audrey Jarvis's ever popular Trees Committee update follows on pages 6 to 8 with pictures of the committee at work. They are currently planning for the next planting season starting in November 2022.

Heritage Open Day 2021 returned to a good portion of its pre-covid attendance and Peter Earl reflects on last year and plans for this year on page 9.

Jane Slater has been busy "Keeping you in the 'loop'" and there are details of upcoming Coffee Time Talks to be found on pages 9 and 10, the next talk on 12th July involving a pair of intrepid adventurers and a 1900 car. More details about the talks planned for September and December are on page 10.

Happy reading!

With all good wishes



Membership Secretary & Trustee - Diana Wilkins



Our new membership secretary is Diana Wilkins.

Diana grew up in West Sussex and has lived in Lewes since 2015. She is an art historian with a particular interest in the early twentieth century. For example, she has worked at Charleston Farmhouse and on the Reeves Archive exhibition about the women's suffrage campaign.

She now works for the Association of Women Art Dealers. Prior to her career in the art world, Diana was a scientist and civil servant, and spent twenty years tackling climate change and environmental issues.

Trustee – Stephen Catlin

Television with the Beatles, aged 15, looking after HM the Queen Mother, HM The Queen and HRH The Princess Margaret on various visits to the Wyndham's and Piccadilly Theatres in London at 26. A couple of the more interesting events in the life of this descendant of a family of economic refugees from Bremen who came to London's East End in 1811, and set up as fur and seal skin dressers in Chicksand Street, off Brick Lane.

He has lived in Lewes for 22 years. Many will remember his eponymous shop Catlin's in Lewes High Street. A conversation with Cllr O'Keefe, a regular in the shop for dark chocolate, led him to stand for Lewes Town Council, as an independent, in 2011.

He has served the Town of Lewes as a Councillor, for half the 22 years he has lived in the Town. Of his year as Mayor, which finished this year on 12 May, he says, "While there have been notable ceremonial occasions, including a British Citizenship Ceremony at Southover Grange, the installation of two High Sheriffs in Lewes Crown Court, and the closing event in 2021 of Lewes' Black History Month, the most emotional and heart-warming events have been the Civic Award presentation to John Agard and Grace Nichols, and the Mayor's Spring Tea which reunited groups of senior citizens who had not been able to see each other for two years due to the Covid restrictions.

Stephen is a member of the Priory Trust, a Trustee of the Friends of Lewes, and a core donor to the Royal Ballet School at Covent Garden, and a Baton Associate of the Royal Opera House, which, because of his fifty years' association with the Theatre used him in an oral history project recording excerpts from which still feature in fund raising publicity.

He is often seen around the Town tending the flower beds outside the Fuego Lounge, The Secret Garden, between the Friend's Meeting House and All Saints churchyard, and with help from Lewes Little Gardens, the flower beds in Western Road, opposite Richards the Butchers.

Planning Update *from Roger Maskew*

Since the Annual Report issued in April 2022 there have been two meetings of the Planning Committee at the beginning of May and June, when a total of 49 applications were considered and comments made to the relevant planning authority on 15 submissions.

Of particular concern are three current projects that are likely to have a significant impact on both the centre of Lewes and within the Lewes Conservation Area as discussed below.

As previously reported a strong objection was made to the proposal to demolish the former **Wenban Smith** woodyard buildings at Eastgate Wharf as it was considered that the removal of the existing buildings within the Lewes Conservation Area should only proceed if and when replacement buildings or an alternative development are planned. As yet this matter has not been resolved.

An objection was also made to the 'pre-application' proposals for the redevelopment of **Lewes Bus Station** as the plans contained no proposals to replace the bus station either within the development or at an alternative location.

A planning application to redevelop the **Lewes Bus Station** has now been lodged by the developer and was considered at the meeting of the Planning Committee on the 01st June and the Committee is minded to recommend to the Society that a further objection be submitted.

A number of alternative locations for a bus station have been suggested but as yet none of the options have been agreed although it is understood that one of the options to provide bus stops on both sides of the Phoenix Causeway is considered to have some merit.

Notwithstanding the bus station issue, the proposals for the existing bus station site have been redesigned and both the bulk and scale of the development have been significantly reduced. However, the revised proposal is still considered to be an overdevelopment of this sensitive site within the Lewes Conservation Area.

The Planning Committee is of the view that it is essential that an alternative provision for a suitable bus facility must be agreed prior to any planning approval being approved. Indeed, the Planning Committee is also of the view that a suitable planning condition should be drafted that would prevent the demolition of the existing bus station until an alternative bus facility has been both agreed and implemented.

The remaining project of significance that is likely to have an impact on both Lewes Town Centre and the Lewes Conservation Area is the anticipated planning submission for the **North Street Quarter**, or the Phoenix Project as promoted by Human Nature, is detailed in the next item of this newsletter.

THE NORTH STREET QUARTER *from Roger Maskew*

Human Nature held a public exhibition of the latest proposals for their “Phoenix Project” on the weekend of 22nd to the 24th April 2022 at Phoenix House, 32 – 33 North Street, when a large number of drawings were on display together with a model of the proposed development plus a sequence of guided tours of the site were undertaken.

Of particular relevance was the inclusion of a ‘Masterplan’ for the overall site as part of the briefing notes issued to all of the visitors to the exhibition. Other topics explained included “Affordable Homes”, “Generous public spaces”, “A place to be beside the river”, “Beautiful shared gardens”, “Hundreds of new jobs”, “Family fun a youthfulness”, “Streets safe for walking and cycling”, “New flood defences” and a “Development to be proud of”.

On leaving the exhibition, all visitors were asked whether they supported the scheme with the question “Are you with us?”

On the 18th May 2022, three members of the Human Nature design team made a ‘zoom’ presentation to members of the Friends of Lewes Executive Committee and Planning Committee, which proved to be very informative and the presentation was subsequently discussed at a meeting of the Executive Committee on the 25th May 2022.

However, the Society considers that there are a number of concerns that warrant further consideration which include the following: -

1. The overall impact of the proposed traffic on the centre of Lewes, (including the Conservation Area), has yet to be assessed.
2. As currently proposed, the construction of the Phoenix Project would require all materials and equipment to gain access (and egress) from the site via the Conservation Area.
3. The proposed provision of a new route for pedestrians and cyclists to link the site with Lewes Station is along streets which are currently one way, (rather than two way).
4. There is very little ‘linkage’ or ‘continuity’ between the proposed development and the existing town centre.
5. The remote location of the proposed Health Hub could make access difficult for patients.
6. There appears to be no provision for public car parking within the overall site apart from in the proposed mobility hub, where the number of public car parking spaces for non-residents has yet to be confirmed.
7. There appears to be no provision for coach parking facilities for visitors.
8. Options for locating suitable bus facilities to enable the existing bus station to be developed have yet to be determined, (including a possible option on the Phoenix Project site).
9. As yet, there has been no indication from Human Nature regarding the proposed phasing of the development, which could be crucial to the successful integration of the development proposals within the existing Town of Lewes.

It is anticipated that an “Outline Planning Application” will be submitted to the South Downs National Park Authority during June 2022, when further details of the proposals will need to be made public.

After the submission of this planning application the Society will be able to access the proposals in greater detail.

Trees Committee Update *from Audrey Jarvis*

We are always keen to involve children with improving our wonderful natural environment, so we were thrilled to be asked to be involved in a hedge planting project with all of the pupils of Western Road and Southover Primary School!

Over five days at the end of January and the beginning of February, we helped each of the 550 pupils to plant their own small tree to make a wildlife hedge around the perimeter of their shared school playing field. Members of the Trees Committee were joined by parents, teachers, and teaching assistants in this very well-organised event, coordinated by the two marvellous Deputy Headteachers, Lisa Walker and Rea Hamilton. The native tree whips planted included Guelder Rose, Hazel, Beech, Hawthorn, Field Maple, Dogwood, Blackthorn, Common Buckthorn, Dog Rose, and Wayfaring Tree.

This project came out of the Green United “Big Ask” last year, when all the schoolchildren of Lewes were asked to put forward their ideas for improving biodiversity in their school grounds. The children are very proud of “their” trees and visit them regularly to check on their growth.

Lewes Urban Arboretum also donated and planted a lovely Field Maple to add to the row of four trees at the edge of the car park.



Trees Committee Members



Guelder Rose blossom

In April, we received a donation of eight Turkish Hazel trees, (*Corylus colurna*), to plant as street trees. Working with Chris Bibb, LDC Specialist Adviser for Parks and Open Spaces, we quickly found good places for them all so that we could plant them before the end of the best tree planting period. We placed two in Timberyard Lane, following a request made to us at the Planet Party last September, two in St. Pancras Gardens, and four in Jubilee Gardens. They are all doing very well, and we hope that one day they will look as magnificent as the Turkish Hazel growing outside Waterstone's!



Turkish Hazel, St. Pancras Gardens

Later in April, we were asked to advise Lewes Rugby Club about planting a memorial tree at the Stanley Turner Ground. They selected a beautiful Hybrid Whitebeam, (*Sorbus thuringiaca Fastigiata*), which we helped them to plant on a lovely Spring morning. It is a cross between a Rowan and a Whitebeam and shows the best features of both trees!



Hybrid Whitebeam at the Stanley Turner Ground

Once the planting season had finished, the Trees Committee met to make a two-year plan for street tree planting around Lewes. We are now busy organising all the permissions necessary so that we are ready to start again in November 2022!

Heritage Open Days 2022 – *from Peter Earl*

Lewes event 9th-11th September

The Friends of Lewes are once again organising the annual Heritage Open Days event in the town. This is a festival designed to recognise the importance of the special architecture and history on our doorsteps, as well as to promote the culture of the town to a wider audience. This year's Lewes event is to run from Friday 9th September to Sunday 11th September with a full programme of open venues and walks.

Please add this date to your calendar and pass it on to friends and relatives. The organising committee are always on the lookout for new venues to add to the event, so if you have a property that you would like to make available, please contact the secretary at enquiries@friends-of-lewes.org.uk. Alternatively, if you would like to be a steward for the event helping with some of the walks, or overseeing visits to properties (this might only involve sitting in a property for a couple of hours to great visitors and explain basic historical features based on guidance notes), do please get in contact. In 2021 there were a total of 4290 individual visits to buildings and walks.

The national theme for this year's Heritage Open Days is 'astounding inventions' with the aim of celebrating England's rich history of invention, industry and innovation. Whether it's transporting visitors back to the industrial revolution, examining the inventions that influence our daily lives, highlighting the legacy of a local inventor, or showcasing cutting-edge innovations - this year, all of the HOD festival community are being encouraged to showcase the diverse tapestry of English inventions that make our world go round. This gives plenty of scope to highlight the wealth of industry that once existed in the town.

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 secretary, Diana Freestone, via email - enquiries@friends-of-lewes.org.uk

Friends of Lewes Coffee Time Talks to be held by Zoom in 2022

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.

Our most recent Talk was given by Marcus Taylor on the 17th of May and was definitely the most popular Talk we have given with over 30 Members attending. Marcus Taylor looked at two streams in Lewes which, though very short, have had a significant effect on the town over the centuries. One made possible the building of Lewes Priory and supplied its advanced drainage systems and ponds with water. The other, with its seasonal flow and thus a dry channel for much of the year, has brought disruptive flooding to Southover on many occasions.

His talk was Illustrated with the most fascinating pictures of the floods. There have been a few requests from members who were not able to see it and wonder if there might be sufficient interest in a repeat performance at a later date. Do please let us know if you would us to organise another showing.

Our next Coffee Time Talk is planned for the 12th July to be given by Tam Large & Mike Sewell who will describe their Veteran Adventures on the London to Brighton Veteran Car Run.

From Zero to Hero - driving a 120-year-old car to Brighton on the world's oldest motoring event. Mike Sewell & Tam Large's sometimes hilarious, sometimes frustrating, experiences getting a stubborn 1900 Veteran car to work: finally reaching Brighton on the 9th attempt and winning a national prize for their perseverance. As well as stories of their fun with Model T Fords and ancient bicycles. During the Talk we hope to show a video of the actual car they use and Tam riding one of the oldest bicycles with metal wheels.



On September 20th I am hoping to have a talk about the Swift Birds given by a member of the Lewes Swift society.

Then on the **6th of December** I am trying to have a Christmas theme I know a Fireman who is also Chimney Sweep and wonder if he's ever come across Santa Claus 🧑🔥 in his travels over Christmas time

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