

Newsletter

March 2022

Edition Seven

Welcome: to the seventh e-newsletter from Fascinating Fens. If you love the fens as much as we do, please continue to receive this quarterly newsletter. It will be full of fen facts, fen festivals, places to visit, events and promotions. If quarterly is not enough for your fen updates, then follow us on Twitter, Facebook or our blog www.fascinatingfens.com. If you would like to contribute to the newsletter by writing an article or being a guest editor, please get in touch. The newsletter will be published in June, September, December/January and March, all articles must come to us by the end of the previous month. If you would like to sponsor this newsletter or other Fascinating Fens projects, then please see the section about sponsorship in this newsletter. Please feel free to email it to others or print it off for friends or visitors. Above all, we would love it if people could get involved, as this newsletter is for you.

In this newsletter....

In this issue you will find the following:

- Welcome
- Are you ready for Celebrate the Fens Day 2022?
- Fen Edge Trail news – discovering the Landscape Heritage of the Fens by Cambridge Geological Society
- What a Malarky by Mandie Blackburn
- Fen Folk Fridays: 'The Great Fen', 'The Crowland Buffalo' and 'Eels in The Fens'
- Other events in the Fens
- Fens Community Join in Page

“The Fens” 2023 Calendar

The Fens calendar competition will return this June, so start taking your photos for the 2023 calendar. Please visit our website for details www.fascinatingfens.com. It will re-open on Celebrate the Fens Day. We're looking for areas of the Fens in all seasons – Happy photo taking

Celebrate the Fens Day 2022:

Who is ready for this year's Celebrate the fens day /weekend? Please put it on your calendar.

Calling all organisations, groups, individuals, businesses across all parts the Fens. Please get in touch if you would like to put on an event for Celebrate the Fens day (and you will be emailed a registration form to complete). It will take place 18th June 2022, and will be celebrated the whole weekend (17th-19th). **Please note the deadlines for registering your involvement to feature on our website is by 31st March 2022.**

Organisations getting involved so far include: Wisbech Castle, Crowland Abbey, Madeleine's Patch, Chatteris Little Acre Pocket Park, Spalding Gentlemen's Society, Boston Ramblers and New Life on the Old West.



Fen Edge Trail news – discovering the Landscape Heritage of the Fens

'When is a hill not a hill?' Well, in the Fens any hill is significant and hills (of various sorts) feature in three Fen Edge Trail walks that have either recently been published or will be soon. On the walk from Sutton to Haddenham, which takes you around the south western edge of the Isle of Ely, you walk up the highest hill in the Cambridgeshire Fens, North Hill. From 2 metres above sea level by the 'Catchwater' drain, the Trail goes uphill up past pastures (with the occasional sheep) and through an orchard to a heady 40 m or so above sea level! Glacial material (Till), left here after the last 'Ice Age' (the Pleistocene) a few hundred thousand years ago, covers the western end of a Jurassic and Cretaceous (millions of years old), clay and sand ridge forming this higher land. There are excellent views from the upper slopes - west to the Ouse Washes, north to Sutton (on another high ridge), south towards the Old West River and east across to Ely Cathedral. The Walk Guide for this walk was published in autumn 2021.

In contrast, our walk around the riverside fens in the centre of Cambridge starts on the historic Castle Hill, only a little more than 20 metres above sea level but giving a view south over the rooftops of the city. This strategic spot has been the site of a Roman fort, a Norman motte and bailey castle, a later stone castle and a Civil War earthworks – a history that reflects its importance near a crossing point of the River Cam, once on the very edge of the extensive fenland marshes to the north. Underlain by Cretaceous Chalk bedrock, the castle site is covered by a patch of Pleistocene ice-age gravels that were left on an old (the 4th) river terrace of the Cam about 200 thousand years ago.

The third hill, on the walk from Peterborough to Stanground, is Tout Hill, or Toothill, located in the grounds of Peterborough Cathedral. It is hardly a hill at all – it is a large, circular mound built as a motte (with accompanying castle) in the 11th century. Although only about 9 metres above sea level, it is in a strategic place, on higher (and, therefore, dryer) ground formed by gravels of an old terrace of the River Nene that covers the underlying Jurassic clay and limestone bedrock. It is just one of the historic features on a walk through central Peterborough before the Trail heads down, to follow the fen edge to the east.

The Walk Guides for these last two walks will be published this year. There are plenty of other 'hills', a surprisingly varied landscape and a rich history to discover as you explore the (48 or so) walks on the Fen Edge Trail. More info on www.fenedgetrail.org/overview/walks.

by the Cambridgeshire Geological Society



Fen
Folks Friday



Fen Folks Fridays:

If you love the fens, join our free friendly monthly zoom "Fen Folks Fridays" to meet others who share your interest. Each meeting includes a speaker about topics relating to the fens. If you are new to zoom, please feel free to email me prior to the event as I'm happy to practice a little with you first online. It will also include updates of forthcoming events in the fens. We also have time at the end for a general natter. Please book in advance via our website. Here are next few meetings...

Great Fen



18th March 2022: 'The Great Fen, a future wetland and more,' with Wildlife Trust BCN Monitoring and Research Officer, Henry Stanier.

The masterplan for the [Great Fen](#) sets out the ambition to create a huge wetland area. One of the largest restoration projects of its type in Europe, the landscape of the fens between Peterborough and Huntingdon has begun its transformation over the last 20 years, for the benefit both of wildlife and people. This Living Landscape for the future is a fantastic legacy of the Rothschild family, with a diverse mosaic of habitats taking shape. It is fast developing as a bird-watching mecca, for raptors in particular. Hear about the latest progress of the Partnership and the results of the monitoring taking place, with the latest stunning photographs and wildlife videos.

Twitter: @greatfen website: www.greatfen.org.uk

May 27th 2022: 'Fens, Romans, Countrymen: A History of Eels in the Fens' by Dr. John Wyatt Greenlee

Eels are among the most iconic of Fenland creatures. They have long been a part of the region's cultural and economic heritage. But what does that history actually look like? In this presentation, medieval historian Dr. John Wyatt Greenlee will talk about the ways that eels have intertwined with Fenland history from the Romans through the later Middle Ages. **We're currently considering making this session a hybrid zoom and meet up session, so we'll keep you posted.**

John Wyatt Greenlee, PhD. Twitter: [@greenleejw](#)
TIME "[Keeping it Eel: How One Historian Is Using Twitter and Medieval Factoids to Help Endangered Animals](#)"
Portfolio: jwgreenlee.net Projects Site: historiacartarum.org
"Eels of History" Site: eels.historiacartarum.org

June 17th 2022: Celebrate The Fens weekend Lauch event

We'll be joined by many organisations who are involved with Celebrate the Fens Day/weekend, our calendar photo competiion will be launched and we may even be joined by a special guest speaker

We would also love to start in summer 2022, a meet up group, once a month on a Friday morning, as a chance to watch a recording of the previous Fens Folks Friday week, for those who do not use computers or if you prefer to meet face to face. But this is only at the ideas stage, let us know if you'd like to join in.

April 22nd 2022: 'The Crowland Buffalo' by Nicholas Day

The buffalo amphibious vehicles that were used in WW2, were needed again during the 1947 floods as ways to dam riverbanks. Daniel Abbott and his team have dug up one of these vehicles from a fen field and are on a mission to get it working. Nicholas will talk about how the Buffalo was found and their current work to restore it. It will hopefully be on display as part of Celebrate the Fens day this year, if you'd like to see the real thing.

www.crowlandbuffalo.com





What a Malarky!

By Mandie Blackburn

A beautiful winter's day that feels closer to spring. It's 29th January 2022 and I'm heading towards the Cutter Inn on the banks of the River Great Ouse at Ely; I can see the crowds forming to watch the opening dances from each of the Molly teams here to commemorate the yearly Mark Jones Day of Dance and I make it just in time to watch the Tilney Ploughers, a group of children in years 5 and 6 from the Tilney All Saints C of E primary school. They have clearly been practising very hard to perform the high standard we can expect for the future of Molly dancing; agile and enthusiastic, they were a joy to watch and made me feel quite envious that my clock is ticking and reminding me that I can no longer kick and flick to the extent that they could muster... In fact I'm not sure that I ever could!




Whilst waiting to meet my band of fellow Fascinating Fenlanders at 11.00 a.m., I continue to watch as many of the teams as I'm able but as the phone signal by the river is too weak to let them know where I'm at, I'm regrettably unable to stay and head off to meet the FF group on the green outside Peacocks Tea Room.



Not to worry though... we soon find our way back to the event by the Maltings in time to watch Madder Mill, Belchamp and Seven Champions/Seven Sisters dancing, and where Fenland Coddwompler Paul, and our very own FF mascot Buster had their own little jig before continuing to wend our way through Ely over the course of the day - from the Market Place to the Cathedral, over to the High Street, Market Street and finally back to the Market Place, we witnessed alongside the local shoppers, tourists and bystanders, the extravaganza of talent performed by the dancers, musicians, and even Morris dog Nancy who assists the Black Annis Molly Team

Costumes varied from traditional farm worker outfits (Mepal Molly/Beauchamp Molly) to psychedelic skirts, tights and jackets (Gog Magog) and a whole host of variations between. Pig Dyke in their striking black and white, while Misfits inspiring in their creativity, creating individual characters (the Bee Lady being just one of many). Some teams using face paints for the most amazing effects whilst others using hair and wigs for impact. Of course, the coordinated uniforms of the Seven Champions with their decorated sashes and Madder Molly in their resplendent all black uniforms with red accents didn't go unnoticed either. The participating teams travelled from as far afield as Carshalton in Surrey and the 'treacle mines' of Frittenden, Kent... and were joined by those (some of whom still travel a way) from Norfolk, Leicestershire and Cambridgeshire.





It was great to have an excuse to meet up with a number of our FF members who are usually just bodiless heads visible on Zoom – and for others who have made ‘Molly’ connections via social media to be able to meet in person. It seems we can all look forward to further friendships and acquaintances being established as events open up and we join together on a more frequent basis.

With thanks to the Ouse Washes Mollys who coordinated and arranged such a fabulous day. Thanks also to all who participated behind the scenes - from Mum and Dad’s taxi services to the support systems - you all helped alongside the performers to create a fantastic day. Each team add something very special to Molly/Morris dancing and I’ll be looking forward to seeing more in 2022.

Congratulations to Black Annis and Nancy the Morris Dog who retained their 2021 titleholders of the Broom Dance.

I’ve finally finished writing my book: Horary!! I’ll tell you more about it in the next newsletter including a book launch....



Are you a writer in the Fens:

Our Fen Shop is growing, so if you write books about various aspects of the Fens (factual or fictional), we can sell your books for you, just get in touch.

Are you a maker in the Fens:

You may wish to sell your Fen items on our online Fen shop on our website, it be made in the Fens and relate to the Fens in some way.

Special Fen Anniversaries in 2022:

Moulton Windmill: Turns 200 years old this year, so look out for celebrations relating to this. It is the tallest windmill in the country.

1947 Floods: 75 years since areas such as Crowland and Earith had to find ways to manage the flooding. Watch a great video by Mike Petty: Fen Floods of 1947 on YouTube

WHATS ON AT RAMSEY RURAL MUSEUM IN 2022

WOOD LANE, RAMSEY, PE26 2XD 01487 815715
For admission prices visit www.ramseyruralmuseum.co.uk



Exhibitions
April/May Local WI
June/July Ramsey 1952
Aug/Sept Local People
Look out for more
details



Ramsey Fen Fair
50, 60 & 70s Night
Saturday 14th May
7pm to midnight
In Drill Hall at 1940s Camp

**HERITAGE DAY
FOOD & CRAFT FAIR**
April 3rd 11am – 4pm

Ramsey Fen Fair
Incorporating
Fenland Classic Vehicle Show
Sunday 15th May
11am-4pm

**Hereward The Wake
Jubilee Weekend**
3rd and 4th June

Fen Community join in page:

If you love the fens and like the type of thing fascinating fens is trying to achieve, why not volunteer with us to promote and explore the fens? You can spend as much or as little time as you wish, helping with our projects. Please get touch to find out more.

Or if you're a not-for-profit organisation who would like help with specific one of tasks, and would like to advertise for some volunteers feel free to write section for the newsletter. Examples could be tree planting, bird counting, decoration making etc. Just get in touch and we'll see what we can do

Would you like to help Fascinating Fens with any of the following as a volunteer:

- We'd love next year to be able to have a stall at events to promote our community work, would you like to help us?
- Would you like to design a quiz logo for our annual December Festive Fen quizzes?
- Give a talk for Fen Folks Friday on a fen topic you are passionate about.
- Help judge our calendar competition?
- Help with making or leading of Fen treasure hunts?
- Helping to run face to face meet ups such as our idea for a Fen Memories group.

Upcoming:

St Winnolds Fair is hopefully returning to Downham Market 25th March 2022.

Sponsor Fascinating fens....

If you own a business/company in the fens why not sponsor one of our projects. Your sponsorship would help our current projects continue and help to develop further new projects.

In return you will receive advertisements in our newsletter, website and social media. Please get in touch for more details
fascinatingfens@outlook.com

Thank you for reading this newsletter, hoping you have enjoyed it. Look out for the June edition. Feel free to print this newsletter for you customers/clients/visitors or email to friends. Get in touch if you have any ideas for this newsletter, photos or forthcoming events.