

The Lockdown Lighthouse

THE INTERIM NEWSLETTER FROM THE FRIENDS OF STANDEN ESTATE:

NUTS ABOUT STANDEN
and missing it loads



No 28 - 18th February 2021

In this edition of The Lockdown Lighthouse:

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HAS BLEAU FOUND LOVE?
INSPIRATIONAL TO ALL
COMEDY CORNER
SPECIAL DELIVERY
A CHILLING STORY
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AND FINALLY - BUT IMPORTANTLY....

FoSE membership

It's that time of year again. Your FoSE membership is due for renewal on 1st March, and, with other income streams severely limited at the moment, we really need your support to help James keep the estate looking beautiful.

As I said before, few members are up at Standen at the moment. So this year's membership form will come to you as an attachment to this newsletter in both Word and pdf format. A copy will also be available on the website at <http://www.fose.org.uk/about/>. Scroll down and click 'here'. If you are able to pay by BACs transfer the account details are: Friends of Standen Estate, Lloyds Bank: sort code 30-92-92, account number 01856808. Please add the reference 'Subs' followed by your name.

So, from **1st March**, we would ask all members to fill in their forms electronically and return them to Roy Page at membership@fose.org.uk and at the same time make a bank transfer to the FoSE account. Please make it clear if you are paying for more than one person. The accounts record donations and subscriptions separately, so it is important to know exactly who the money is covering.

If BACs doesn't work for you, email me at newsletter@fose.org.uk with a request for an address to which to send a cheque and form by post. If you don't have a printer, let me know your details by email and I can fill one in on your behalf.

Subs, as I said before, now stand at £5, but please don't let that stop you donating more should you wish to do so! James and his staff would be very grateful.

Stan the man

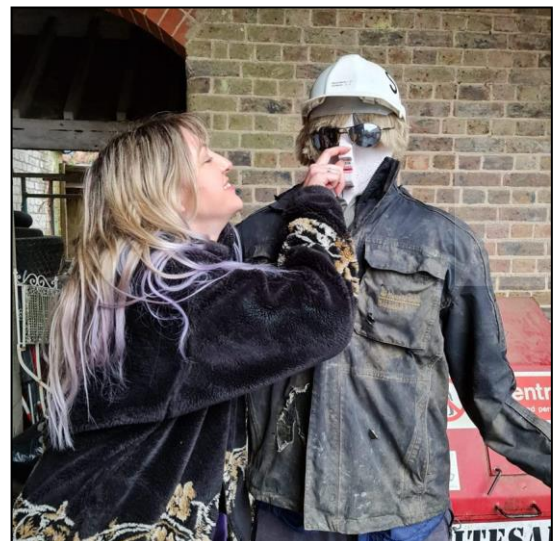
It seems that Bleau has not let the grass grow under her feet during lockdown, but has taken the opportunity to find a new man - Stan the man to be precise, a handsome, hulking scarecrow created by Geoff Hill of the Woods Group to keep birds away from the Kitchen Garden. As she says,



I was having a silly moment on Friday and took a selfie. It's me and my fiancé Stan. Love for me at last!



Her email continued:



*Me and Stan again, what a cute couple we make ha ha.
And I know. My hair. Eeeek. Don't worry it's not permanent.*

We had a pretend wedding on Friday in the quarry garden. Carolyn made the cake and we were pulled off into the sunset on the Ferarri. Stan on wheels and I a fireman's lift.

Though I said to James I am a bit worried he doesn't say much to me. I think he is shy? He looks so pale too but I think he caught chill in the cold weather.

Oh it helps to be silly for a bit doesn't it. It's a tough lockdown this one.

James cautioned me not to tell Bleau that he's not real!

Bleau says she has found it strange being able to work on-site at Standen again, though she is also working from home and keeping busy with other projects online. Hopefully we will all be back at Standen soon. I think Geoff needs an accolade too, for an ingenious and creative bit of bird-scaring. Let's hope it does the trick.

The Marsh family's music

Some of you may recall the inspirational video which went out with the very first *Lockdown Lighthouse* of the Marsh family from Faversham singing *One More Day*. If you have forgotten, it can be found at <https://youtu.be/wdcSONbo7Ng>
Anne discovered several more of their inspirational songs at the following links:

<https://youtu.be/ZnbOKH9Oe9s> - *Have the new jab*

<https://youtu.be/vYmSAMcwXA8> - *Totally fixed where we are*

<https://youtu.be/YAZ7D8NhWbU> - *Twelve Days of Christmas*

<https://youtu.be/nMQF2R5A6x8> - *I know them too well*

<https://youtu.be/7TwrR7F3NwE> - and *Under Pressure*, which also features the family dog.

Perils of Internet shopping

With shops closed, and many of us reluctant to enter them even when they are not, it's not surprising that Internet shopping has taken off in the way it has.



Your parcel will be delivered by Steve, in a white van at exactly 9:23am and a photo will be taken for prosperity. There are six stops before you. You can stalk Steve by clicking [here](#).



Your parcel will be delivered today and if you're not in, we'll deliver it to someone else instead, like your cat. We'll make sure to let you know "Parcel was handed to customer". You, cat, on your roof, same thing, right?



We tried delivering your parcel but you weren't in. Well, you probably were, but you didn't open the door when we knocked with the force of a feather. Now you'll have to reschedule or come to us instead.



Your parcel will be delivered at some point, by someone. Might be 10am, might be 10pm, but we'll get there. And if we don't get there, we'll say we've delivered it anyway, then deliver it tomorrow instead when you're out. We'll leave it in your wheelie bin on collection day.

No doubt many of us have an interesting delivery story to tell, but I rather liked this piece, which Martin found, and which gives a tongue in cheek description of the delivery services on offer.

Laugh your troubles away

On a political note, James Cordon also made use of *One More Day* in his farewell to Donald Trump, so if you want another version of the song, have a look at:

pic.twitter.com/I9PiSRvCOA

Or, if you prefer, here's a quick two-liner:

Patient: "Doctor, when do you think Covid-19 will be over?"

Doctor: "I don't know, I'm not a journalist."

Our beautiful - but diminishing - birdlife

The following piece, by Nancy, is an ecological triumph. Although I don't get the range of birdlife she does, I recognise many of the trends, and like her, mourn the disappearance of the Siskins, which used to arrive regularly in my garden at this time of year. Many thanks, Nancy, for this detailed and considered article.

It occurred to me, as I was wondering what to ramble on about for this week's newsletter, that I am in an unique position to be able to assess the differing bird population in my garden over a forty-five year period! I have always fed and watched birds but during the lockdown have had the opportunity to observe more closely. I have noticed the complete absence of some species and the abundance of others.

I think that the most obvious reason for some of the changes is the difference in the farming methods during this time. In the first twenty years, we were surrounded by three fully-functioning farms, two with dairy cows, one of which had a prizewinning Jersey herd and one with a beef herd. Two of the farms also grew cereals on a seven year rotation. In the past twenty years this has all changed. There are now no cows at all, many fields lying fallow. The farm that used to have the Jersey herd now has a few sheep and has converted barns and other buildings into accommodation. Of the two Dairy farms, one, the Chiddinglye estate has been very enterprising with two fields of solar panels and sheep grazing underneath them! Plus they have opened up a mini brewery, growing their own hops and vines. They obviously grow barley as well and have started an orchard. The farm that directly backs on to us, where Frisian cows used to graze and their old Hereford bull 'Henry' used to put his head over the fence to be scratched (he was a soft old thing) took longer to decide what to replace the cows with, so fields were hired out, which produced Corn grown as cattle food. There was no rest period for the fields and the soil became very poor. Finally it was decided that horses were the way to go, with some fields taken over for hay. All these changes were bound to have effects on habitat and food source.

One of the saddest declines has been the complete loss of our House Martins, which used to nest year after year under the eaves at the front of the house. Starlings also nested here. We have come to the conclusion that this is because of the road which has become so much busier than when we first arrived.

There used to be a great number of Pied Wagtails that nested in and around our chimneys, which are very tall. The babies fell down into our lounge fireplace on a regular basis and were duly rescued and taken outside again, where the parents seemed to go on caring for them. They have almost completely gone from the garden now, except for the occasional one. The other birds that have disappeared are Chaffinches, Greenfinches, Bullfinches, Jays, Collared Doves, Green Woodpeckers, Barn Owls and Sparrows. This year in particular I have noticed the lack of Nuthatches, even though I have had peanut feeders out. In general I don't hear as many owls, I am puzzled as to why this should be, as we are surrounded by woods and copses in this area and there is definitely no decline in small mammals. A couple of years ago, we suddenly had a whole flock of Grey Wagtails on our patio, they stayed around the garden for a few weeks, then disappeared never to be seen again. This also happened with a flock of Chiff Chaff which I came across rooting about under some shrubs, their distinctive call attracting my attention.

However, we have an abundance of other regular species, in particular the wonderful 'Tits'! Blue Tits together with Great Tits and Coal Tits (my favourite) and this year, during the cold spell, the return of Long Tailed Tits, that haven't been in the garden for a while, although they have been about locally. There were thirteen on one of the Fat Ball feeders during the snow! Dunnocks, Blackbirds, Tits and Thrushes nest in the garden, also Robins of course. Dunnocks have become quite abundant in recent years, which seems to coincide with the decline of the sparrows! We had a lot of Goldfinches earlier this year but other finch species have all but gone. There is a Great Spotted Woodpecker living in an adjacent wood, who visits every day. One of the shyest occupants is the Wren. I usually see one every year in early Spring. She comes out from under the hedge wanders onto the patio, darts about amongst the plants and disappears again! This year I saw three in different parts of the garden, so they are obviously happy here. Siskins are a species that appear now and then but not on a regular basis, which is a pity, as they are very pretty. Jackdaws are not quite as common as they



used to be, as we have put new cowls on our chimney pots, so they can't nest anymore! Magpies and Crows/Rooks are scarcer too, as the local farmer shoots them! Magpies may look spectacular but are nasty cruel birds who I have witnessed several times hunting for eggs and baby birds in our hedges.

We do also have far too many Pheasants, they dig and scratch and are quite destructive but so beautiful, even the females. Partridge visit occasionally but are much shyer. There are also several raptors. Buzzards, Kestral and my personal favourite, the Sparrowhawk who visits the garden often, flying like a dart between the bars of our five bar gates to catch some unsuspecting small bird or even a pigeon! On a grander scale the magnificent Red Kite, which first arrived about three years ago patrols from the sky.

A sop to having to stay at home

While most of us yearn to be able to travel more than five miles from home, Pat's story below is perhaps a reminder that it's better to stay put.

HEART OF GOLD

'Heart of Gold'. That was the name given, in jest, to the first real exploration to leave planet earth and go where no man (or, in these enlightened times, woman as well) had gone before.

The jest was that the original 'Heart of Gold' was the fictional spacecraft in Douglas Adams' 'Hitch-hikers Guide to the Galaxy' that Zaphod Beeblebrux had nicked. It operated an Infinite Improbability Drive, based on the fact that a machine like that is a virtual impossibility so it was logically a finite improbability. In the 20th century, when the book was published, it was a fantasy but, now in the 22nd century, when knowledge had increased so much, it was not quite so fantastic. In fact, although not based on improbability but quantum probability, this new 'Heart of Gold' was using a completely different means of travel. The nearest that people in Douglas Adams' and Startrek's day could guess at was the warp drive, which neatly avoided the problem of going faster than the speed of light, but this was not going to be warp drive technology which still remained as fiction.

With the aid of calculations on the latest quantum computers of the day and various experiments, it looked as though the difficulty had been overcome of travelling faster than light. Without going into the details which would take a fair few pages and bore the pants off everyone, it was thought possible to transfer objects by means of quantum entanglement on a macro scale which did away with the old problem of mass increase.

Harry was the volunteer on The Heart of Gold. He had accepted that it

might be a suicide trip. It was amazing how many people had been willing to undertake this very dangerous experiment but Harry had been selected and was now sitting awaiting the transport - if that was what you could call it, being different from all previous types of transportation. Everything he needed was on board. The team at NASA2 was going to wait 24 hours (earth time) and then try to return *The Heart of Gold*. You could not call it a spacecraft, more a container with Harry and the necessary protection and technology embedded in it.

All manner of theories had been put forward as to what would happen, most of them not prophesying a good future for Harry. The benefits of this though, if successful, would be so tremendous that it was worth the sacrifice of a willing volunteer. If it did work, their name would go down forever as the one who had opened up the possibility of humankind populating first their own galaxy and ultimately the whole of their Universe. There was more than the sky as the limit here.

The time had come. It would be untrue to say that Harry was completely calm about this trip. He had always wanted to live forever and, in the absence of being able to do this in a body, had opted for the fame that would be his even if it were not successful. That was, in truth, the wish of all those who had volunteered - to live on in some way even if only in history.

Harry did not have to operate any controls. He just had to sit there and let the scientists do it. He glanced at the atomic clock which would show the exact time that he was embedded in.

He felt the acceleration, not in the usual way but in a strange and disembodied way. He looked down at himself. Yes, he was still there, solid enough.

He glanced at the atomic clock. He glanced at the atomic clock. And again he glanced. Over and over he would be continuing to glance at the clock until the end of the Universe he knew, if that ever came and who knew what would happen then.

This had not been foreseen. The scientists had known the theory of Tachyons - hypothetical particles that can only travel faster than light and never go over the boundary. They are on the other side of the barrier and because it is so difficult to prove they exist, had only ever remained a theory. Perhaps it should have been considered though - the possibility - because they had another very interesting aspect. If, it was hypothesised by some, you were able to go faster than the speed of light and enter tachyon territory, then you would find that there, time was going backwards compared to us. It did, however, lead to another possibility not generally discussed and it was that going faster than the speed of light was an impossibility for a very different reason than special relativity had dictated. The reason was that, if a person actually got over the speed barrier and entered the tachyon zone into time going in the opposite direction, then they would immediately find themselves back at the actual speed of light. They would continue to flick over and back for what humans call eternity.

Back on earth, the scientists declared the experiment a failure. Harry would go down in history books and whether they would continue on the line already undertaking was not certain.

On the Heart of Gold, Harry had his ambition fulfilled. He was completely unaware of it but he would live forever.

And finally...Would you like to join the committee?

Normally, before the FoSE AGM, committee members start quizzing volunteers about whether they would like to join the FoSE committee. With no AGM last year, the current committee simply carried on as best they could. However, we do need new people from time to time. If you feel you could help, either by standing yourself, or by suggesting someone you feel would be an asset, please let me know at newsletter@fose.org.uk and I will make sure that nomination forms are sent out in good time. There is no rush, as the AGM is not until May. However, most of the committee have been in post for some time and would no doubt welcome some 'new blood'. Please do think about it. Duties are not onerous, around six committee meetings a year, and assistance in planning and setting up FoSE events. We can't do it without you.