

Earth Trust News

Exclusive newsletter for Earth Trust Friends

Expanding
Earth Trust's
transformational
educational
opportunities

Also in this issue...

Relaunching Earth School
Gateway to Learning
Learning from the past



Introduction

Welcome to the spring issue of Earth Trust News; an education special.

One of Earth Trust key objectives is to engage the public with their environment. We do this by providing access to the beautiful green spaces we care for, augmenting those experiences with immersive environmental education opportunities.

When we mention education, it automatically brings to mind school groups visiting Earth Trust to learn about the environment through adventure and play, but the scope of opportunities and ages for which we cater is so much broader than that, and the impact on the lives and future work opportunities is immense.

Earth Trust is a trail blazer in environmental education, offering some of the first forest school lessons which have now become so popular nationwide. Earth School has gone from strength to strength, offering classes for nursery and key stage one, all the way through to GCSE equivalent qualifications.

Our adult learning opportunities are also numerous. As well as a number of apprentice positions across our operation, we welcome volunteers of all ages. In addition to giving them the opportunity to give back to the Trust and their community, Earth Trust enables our volunteers to learn a range of skills: from animal husbandry to computer literacy, develop their skills and learn new ones, providing vital practical experience for the world of work.

Education and learning are central to Earth Trust's work and I am so grateful for the support offered by all our Earth Trust Friends in achieving this.

Until next time,

Jayne

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Contents

Welcome 2
Learning from the past 3
Gateway to Learning 4
Accessible Plant Collections 6
News in Brief 7

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Sponsors

This issue of Earth Trust News has been produced thanks to the generous sponsorship of ImageWorks. Every penny of your Friendship subscriptions goes towards protecting much loved greenspaces and connecting people with the natural world.



Best Place to Learn
About the New
Season (Autumn)



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Learning from the past

Earth Trust undertook an exciting archaeological dig last October, to uncover the secrets of the past hiding beneath our feet. We found the echoes of a thriving community in the shadow of the Sinodun Hills.

Opening up a trench almost 30 metres wide at the Earth Trust Centre was a rare opportunity to gain further insight into the story of our historic site. Working closely with DigVentures, who organise community archaeology projects worldwide, Earth Trust welcomed a team of archaeologists in late October. Just shy of 400 people came along to take part in the dig in a variety of ways, including 179 school children from primary schools across Oxfordshire.

There were various learning opportunities throughout the dig, including finds sessions and daily tours of the dig site led by the archaeologists working in the trench. DigVentures were keen to share an insight into the techniques used during the dig as well as the incredible finds they had unearthed.

The trench uncovered a series of features, including pits containing domestic items buried between 400BC and 100BC; the middle Iron Age is the same period during which the fort on Castle Hill was constructed. The close proximity of structures found previously, together with the findings of this most recent dig paint a fascinating picture of life 2500 years ago and point to a highly organised and powerful community. The people who once handled the artefacts lifted from the ground during the dig, would have been part of that same community that chose Castle Hill as the location for their hill fort, hewing it by hand out of the chalk hillside and making it the totem of their community.



The archaeology undertaken this year is just the start of the learning opportunities on offer for those interested in the heritage of our landscape.



An artist's impression of the middle Iron Age fort and community at the Wittenham Clumps

They left a lasting impression on our landscape and this dig together with ongoing laboratory analysis, gives us a deeper insight into this community and how they lived. For more information on the findings of the dig please see: <https://digventures.com/earth-trust/>

There will be further archaeological opportunities in 2019 as we examine other areas of the Earth Trust Farm, gathering more evidence of the community living on our site thousands of years ago.





Gateway to Learning

Beginning construction later this year, Earth Lab, our new skills and learning building, will transform the educational facilities and opportunities available at Earth Trust.

Earth Trust's educational opportunities have always been underpinned by our outdoor classrooms: the incredible natural green spaces we care for. However, 2019 will be an exciting time for Earth Trust, as we undertake a project to ensure our indoor learning facilities are every bit as interactive, inspiring and educational, as the outdoor green spaces which support our fantastic learning activities.

At the moment children, and adults start their learning journey with Earth Trust, in an indoor space designed as a museum. It is windowless and dark, with no views or direct access to outside space, offering limited inspiration and no interaction for those who have come to us to learn; a stark contrast to our outdoor classrooms! Furthermore, our current facilities only hold one school group at a time, thereby significantly limiting the number of schools we can welcome each week.

Earth Lab

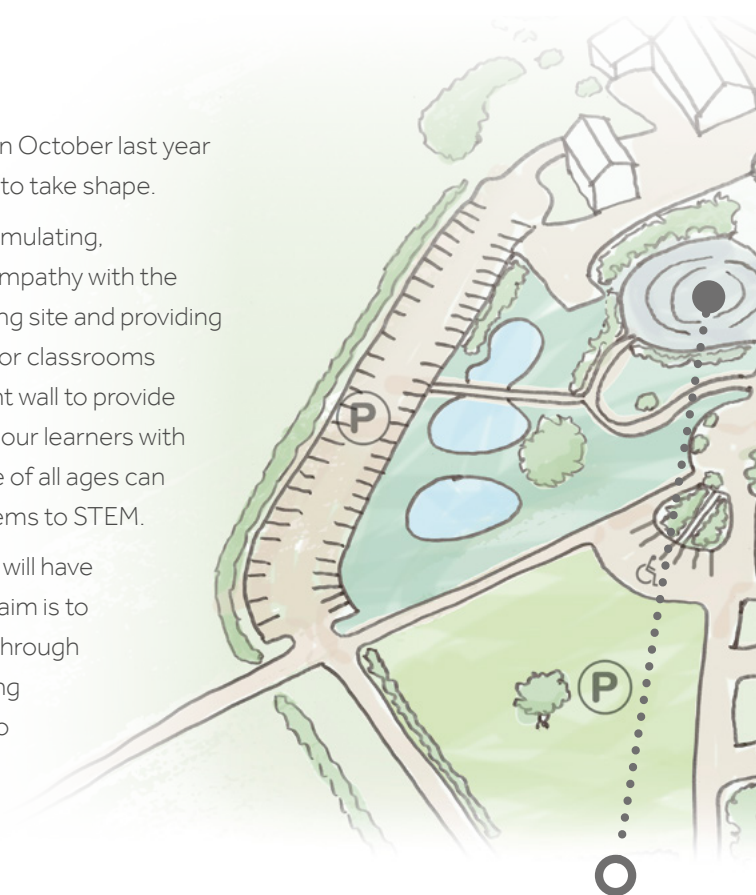
The ground has now been prepared following the archaeological dig in October last year (please see page 3) and over the course of 2019, Earth Lab will begin to take shape.

Earth Lab will be at the heart of the Earth Trust Centre, providing a stimulating, interactive and inspirational education space. It will be designed in sympathy with the surrounding landscape, augmenting the natural beauty of our stunning site and providing a seamless flow from indoor to outdoor learning areas. Our vision is for classrooms which are 'alive', perhaps including see-through pipes and a living plant wall to provide hands-on immersive experiences of ecosystems, which fully engage our learners with the environment around them. We will be able to expand what people of all ages can learn about and discover; from natural sciences, history and ecosystems to STEM.

Supporting our organisational objective to engage people, Earth Lab will have learning opportunities built into the fabric of the structure itself. The aim is to use the building as a demonstration; to show sustainability in action through the materials and construction methods used. Earth Trust will be using sustainable materials, techniques and technology that are available to the mass-market, or close to market, demonstrating that every sustainability gain achieved within this building will be possible and accessible for our visitors themselves, should they be inspired to follow Earth Trust's example.



We will use the building as a demonstration; to show sustainability in action through the materials and construction methods used



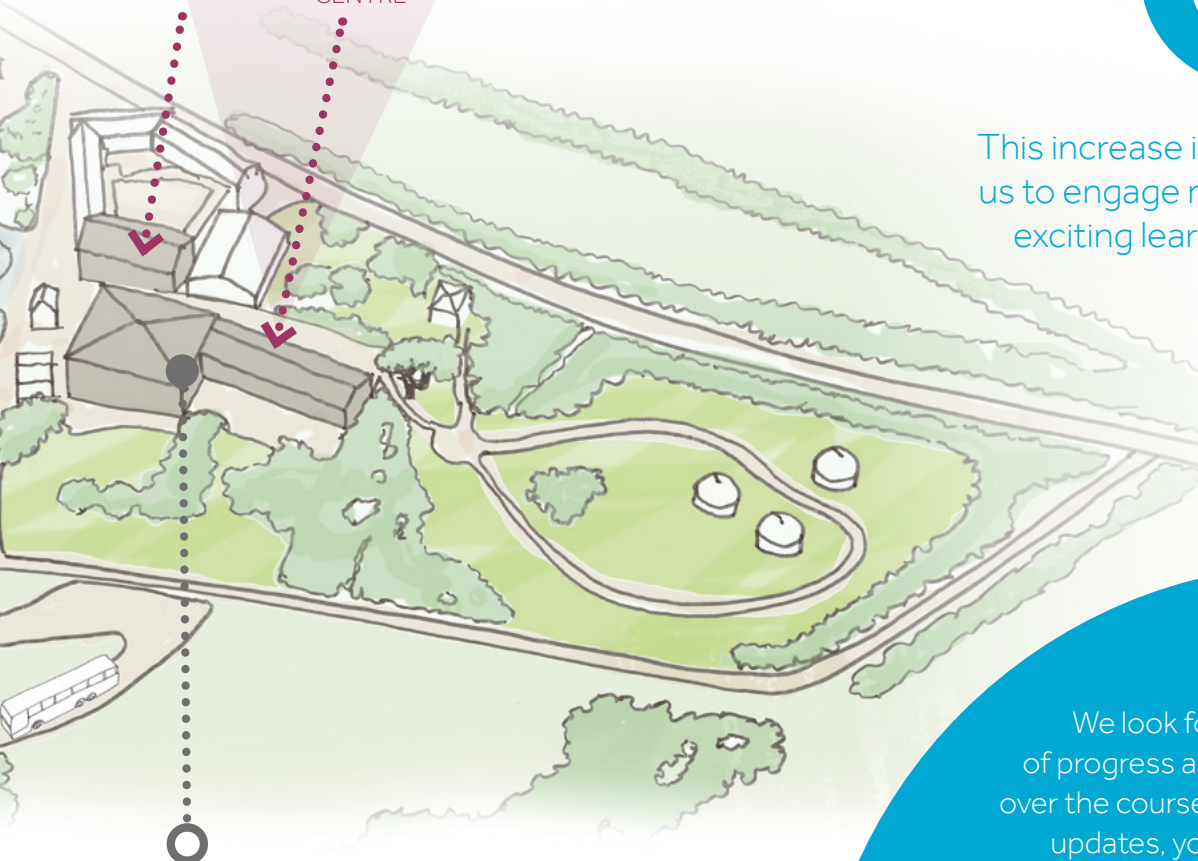
OUTDOOR
CLASSROOM



PHASE 1A EARTH LAB

BUSINESS
HUB

SKILLS & LEARNING
CENTRE



VISITOR CENTRE & CAFE
(coming 2021)

Our Mission

Earth Trust works to engage people of all ages with our mission to help them understand their environment and their role in caring for it. As such this new learning space will be accessed by people of all ages. As well as welcoming school groups during the week, it will also host adults attending skills courses during the evenings and weekends, families enjoying our festivals and birthday party groups.

Crucially, Earth Lab will double Earth School's educational capacity with two flexible classroom learning spaces. This increase in capacity will enable us to pursue two of our major organisational objectives: engaging more people than ever before with our exciting range of learning opportunities; and importantly, safeguarding the Trust's financial sustainability.

By providing a dedicated learning facility, which is inspirational and fit for purpose, Earth Lab will have a significant impact on Earth Trust and our work. We are now fundraising to bring this building to life, if you would like to help bring this landmark project to fruition, please do get in touch' supportus@earthtrust.org.uk



This increase in capacity will enable us to engage more people with our exciting learning opportunities

We look forward to bringing news of progress as Earth Lab takes shape over the course of this year. For regular updates, you may like to sign up for our weekly or monthly e-newsletters: www.earthtrust.org.uk/privacy



Making plant collections accessible for the future

In the final article of our recent series on Paradise Wood, we examine the future impact and importance of Earth Trust's forestry work and our plant collections.



Earth Trust is
a venue for research.
Academics will be able to
access our plant collections
to answer their specific
research question.

Following a hugely successful Plant Health conference hosted by Earth Trust in October and building upon decades of impactful research at Earth Trust, work is underway to put in place a new project which will open up our plant collections to a wide new audience of scientists and researchers.

Originally planted as a series of timber productivity trials, the trees of Paradise Wood were initially cultivated to answer a specific set of research questions. However over the past 25 years, Paradise Wood has provided a range of evidence and data to researchers in varied fields and it is this flexibility that is the key to the future of Paradise Wood.

In line with the organisation's new strategy, launched last summer, Earth Trust will make our plant collections as accessible as possible.

We believe that opening up our plant collections could hold immeasurable opportunities for the development of plant science, using our trees to unlock new research into as yet unknown questions.

As such Earth Trust will be a venue for research, rather than undertake the studies ourselves. Academics will be able to access our plant collections, including the meta-data surrounding each specimen we care for, to help answer their specific research question.

At present, Earth Trust is developing links with higher education institutions to ensure we can provide the correct infrastructure to facilitate multiple research projects; such as employing the necessary expertise, digitising our plant collections and making them accessible via the web. This exciting new direction will provide a host of higher education learning opportunities.

To find out more about our plant collections and to make a donation in support, please visit our website <https://earthtrust.org.uk>

News in Brief

Winter Hedgelaying

Volunteers and course attendees have been getting hands-on during January helping Earth Trust care for our farm by learning the traditional craft of hedgelaying. Earth Trust has over 20 kilometres of hedgerows across the farm and an impressive 250m of hedge has been laid this winter. Hedgerows are a vital biodiversity and heritage asset, not only creating an important habitat for a diverse range of wildlife, but also helping us keep our green spaces safe, open and accessible to everyone.

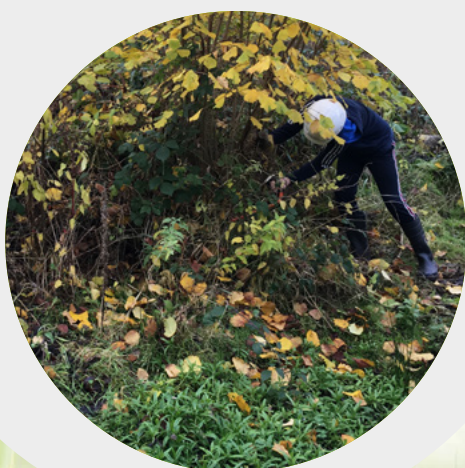
Coppicing lessons for Countryside Skills students

This winter, students have had the opportunity to develop their skills by trying their hand at coppicing. This important woodland management technique helps stimulate growth and provides a wealth of material to use elsewhere on the farm, such as for hedgelaying. The students from St Birinus School in Didcot helped us demonstrate how we care for Little Wittenham Wood, building their skills and self-confidence along the way.



Relaunch of Earth School

Earth School goes from strength to strength, with a new programme of lessons to inspire and educate even more young people. The new sessions have been carefully aligned with current curriculum and learning objectives, which when combined with Earth Trust's incredible outdoor classrooms, offer a unique and valuable learning experience for every child that visits. If your school would like to attend, please see our website: www.earthtrust.org.uk/education



Save the date!

Take a look at the exclusive Friends only events and offers Earth Trust has coming up:

23rd – 24th & 30th – 31st March

10am – 4pm / £22 family, £8 adult, £4 child (online discounts available) / Earth Trust Centre
Lambing Weekends

Join us down on the farm during our annual Lambing Weekends as we celebrate its 30th anniversary! Meet lambs, piglets and goats, and enjoy a range of activities. Earth Trust Friends will enjoy priority entry to the festival and show your Friends card at Admissions to get a voucher for a free cup of tea or coffee.

Saturday 6th April

10.45am – 12pm / Free / Earth Trust Centre

Meet the Shepherd

Emma Blomfield will introduce our Friends to some of the new arrivals in the lambing shed. Find out what it takes to be a shepherd at this very busy time of year! This opportunity is exclusive to Earth Trust Friends and their guests.

FREE
to friends!

Sunday 12th May

2pm – 4pm / £10 (discounted rate for Friends / Earth Trust Centre)

Spring Farming and Forestry Walk

How do we care for our farmland and woodland during the spring? Join Head of Land Management, Chris Parker, for a guided walk. This walk is being offered at a discounted rate for Earth Trust Friends.

Thursday 20th June

5pm – 7.30pm / Free / Earth Trust Centre

Supporters' Day

We invite Friends, volunteers and donors to join us at our annual Supporters' Day Ceremony as we say thank you for your support over the last year. Oxfordshire County Council will also present Earth Trust with a rose as peppercorn rent for the public access we grant to our green spaces, during the annual midsummer Rose Ceremony.

Places are filled on a first come first served basis so book early, quoting your Friends membership number, to avoid disappointment.



www.earthtrust.org.uk

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