

Issue 5 Spring 2020

Earth Trust News

Exclusive newsletter for Earth Trust Friends

Archaeological digs
reveal secrets of
the Clumps

Also in this issue...

Gateway funding boost

Learning from history

Farm Step focus



Welcome

I'm particularly excited to share this latest edition of the newsletter with you. Since last autumn we've made substantial progress on our Gateway Programme (you can now view updates online at earthtrust.org.uk/gateway). A huge part of this has come from the archaeological digs, carried out to ensure that we have captured the significance of this special place before any building or tree planting begins.

We knew that the area may have historical and cultural importance from previous investigations (including by Time Team back in 2004) but both the volume and mystery around the finds has exceeded expectations. In fact, we've extended the archaeologists' dig time to accommodate these finds, which have included everything from the remnants of an oyster diet to remarkably large building footprints. We'll be working with experts to make sure that we learn as much as we can and reflect these discoveries in the Gateway Programme experiences (see p4-5).

During this time our volunteers have welcomed hundreds of people on archaeological tours, sharing the insights we have gained so far. Our schools programme has also expanded to make the most of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see such a rich dig in progress. You can hear more about the work the education team have done on p6.

Alongside all of this activity we're continuing to prepare for the next steps of our Gateway Programme. We're getting ready to break ground on the Earth Lab and Innovation Hub as we've now secured enough funding to start building works (see opposite) and we'll soon be publically launching our appeal to raise the money needed to complete the work. Earth Lab, our new skills and learning centre, will allow us to double our capacity by providing an indoor alternative that's just as inspirational and exciting as our outdoor offering. I do hope you will be inspired to support this project, and if you have any questions please get in touch with our fundraising team at supportus@earthtrust.org.uk

I hope you enjoy this edition as much as we've enjoyed putting it together for you - please do share it if you know someone else who might be interested in Earth Trust and the work we do. And as ever, thank you so much for your ongoing support.

Best wishes,



Dr Jayne Manley, CEO



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News in brief



Artist's impression of Earth Lab

£1m Gateway grant received

We're delighted to announce that we've received £1,000,000 from Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP) to contribute to the first phase of the Gateway Programme. Together with the generosity of the Patsy Wood Trust, 78% of the funds required to build Earth Lab (our environmentally-focused education centre) and the Innovation Hub (our multi-use space for sustainable businesses) have been received. Thanks to this incredible support, we've been able to progress with appointing a contractor. We're delighted to have awarded the contract to Beard, who share our vision for these spaces. Dean Averies, director of Beard Oxford, said: "This project is a fantastic opportunity for Beard to

demonstrate our commitment to sustainable construction. Earth Trust's passion for the scheme is infectious and we will do our utmost to live up to the challenges they've set us. This project will provide a showcase for how sustainable construction can contribute to meeting climate change goals."

You'll be able to view live updates on the Earth Lab build via our BuildCam - coming to the website very soon!

To find out more about the Gateway Programme and how you can support it, please visit earthtrust.org.uk/gateway

A Royal visit

In November we welcomed HRH The Countess of Wessex to Earth Trust. The Countess met CEO Jayne Manley and Chair of Trustees Ian Davidson to learn more about how we are tackling environmental challenges and barriers to people benefiting from a healthy environment, before sharing a lunch prepared using ingredients from our Farm Step tenants.

Ian Davidson, Chair of Trustees, said: "This visit provided us with an opportunity to talk to HRH about the diverse range of work we are involved in at a local, regional and national level... I'm delighted that she is enthusiastic about the environment and education, and how supportive she was of Earth Trust's vision."

River of Life II gets underway

Thanks to everyone who came to our River of Life II consultations in October last year. The events were well attended and feedback on our plans was extremely positive. We expect to hear from South Oxfordshire District Council in the next couple of weeks* with their decision. In the meantime we've undertaken work to prepare the landscape for the ponds and backwaters which we hope to create over the spring and summer. Signage has been put up where work will be taking place in Little Wittenham Wood, Clifton Meadow and at Overy Mead. For further details visit earthtrust.org.uk/riveroflife2

*Correct at time of print

A volunteering first

Earlier this year we held our first volunteer information morning to welcome those new to Earth Trust and catch up with more familiar faces. After a welcome from CEO Jayne Manley and talks from staff and volunteers, attendees shared their experiences over coffee and cake. Senior Warden Tim Read then led a guided walk for those wanting to round off the morning with some fresh air and to find out more about our green spaces. A huge thank you to those who gave talks and to everyone who came along. Find out more about volunteering with Earth Trust at earthtrust.org.uk/volunteer



Jayne Manley meets HRH The Countess of Wessex



Volunteer information morning

Secrets of the Clumps

While the Gateway Programme will allow us to share green spaces with more people than ever before, it also means that the landscape immediately around the current centre and car park will undergo significant change. In order to record and preserve its history, we asked community archaeology specialists DigVentures to carry out digs and support us with interpreting the finds. Here we're able to share with you some of their incredible discoveries.

The investigations have uncovered the remains of two ancient settlements: a large Roman villa, and an older Iron Age village. The finds suggest that the site was almost continuously inhabited from the Iron Age (c.800 BC to 43 AD) right through to the end of the Roman period (c.410 AD), and we may even be able to trace the fortunes of these communities through this time.

The Iron Age village

The Iron Age settlement covered over 250m² including at least 10 roundhouses discovered so far, with some of them measuring up to 14m across. Both the number and size of the roundhouses are indicative of a bustling community, with hundreds of people living here at this time. Large pits (most likely used to store food) were found as well as fragments of pottery from Early to Middle Iron Age vessels, and a type of coin known as a 'rues' (minted by the Catuvellauni, the tribe who lived in south-eastern Britain before the Roman conquest).

A Roman villa

When Time Team investigated the site over a decade ago they found enough Roman artefacts to suggest that a substantial villa may have existed in the area. This new dig (to the west of the

site previously excavated) has finally revealed the building itself: a large Roman corridor villa, a type commonly found in Britain. Although the outer walls no longer survive (the villa may have been dismantled so that the materials could be re-used elsewhere), a row of square, stone-filled column bases indicate that the building would have measured at least 36.5m across. Each base measures about 1.5m², suggesting that this would have been an impressive building supported with ambitious structural stone columns.

At the western end of the corridor, a small room with a doorway was found with a Roman key nearby, along with large quantities of Roman pottery. We can't yet tell what this room was used for, but continued analysis may soon help us to draw a clearer picture.

Roman life

The excavation has also revealed a Roman corn-drying kiln, which would

have been an important part of the settlement. Made up of two rectangular, stone-lined pits, fuel would have been burned at one end and hot air drawn through the kiln to heat and dry the grains stored above ground. We've taken soil samples to try and identify whether the kiln was used solely to dry the harvest, or whether it was part of a maltings which would suggest that our predecessors were making beer here!

Vast quantities of household pottery and kitchen vessels were also found. Some is locally produced Oxford ware which would have been for day-to-day use, while the pieces of Samian ware found would have been saved for special occasions. The finds included a small spouted vessel which may have held more valuable liquids such as oil or perfume, a mortarium (for grinding or mixing dairy, herbs and spices), and part



Top 5 finds

- A type of Iron Age coin known as a 'rues' minted by the Catuvellauni
- Two Roman combs made of bone
- A Roman roof tile with a fox's paw print on it
- A key, still on its keyring, found near a doorway in the Roman villa
- Loom weight (possibly Iron Age)



of a ceramic colander. The team looked for evidence of what kind of diet people had, and found butchered animal bones and shells indicating that it would have included oysters, pork and beef.

Other artefacts include working tools (a pick, a knife and part of a horse's harness), personal items and clothing (a hobnail boot, a decorative brooch, and a bone comb placed in a burial), and a handful of Roman 'change' - low denomination coins mostly dating to the late 3rd and 4th century when activity at the villa seems to have been at its peak. There is even a piece of Roman roof tile with a fox's paw print on it!

What next?

Evidence is still being collected and analysed, but we soon hope to be able to paint a very detailed picture of how people here lived, and to reflect this in our new visitor experience.

Abi Morris, Gateway Visitor Experience and Interpretation Manager, has said of the work: "We're really excited about what the archaeologists are finding and have already made some changes to our plans based on these discoveries. For example, we're reviewing the layout of our adventure area to see if our replica Iron Age roundhouse can sit on the footprint of an actual Iron Age roundhouse discovered in the corner of what was our staff car park.

Finds such as a loom weight (pictured above) show that people in the settlement here were weaving cloth from the wool of their sheep. This kind of information will help us tell the stories of how our ancestors used the landscape compared with our 21st century land management approaches. Once DigVentures have completed the analysis of the finds back in the lab,

they are likely to find evidence of vegetation that will help inform what kind of trees, shrubs and flowers we might plant as part of the Gateway landscaping."

We'll be hosting an archaeology talk with DigVentures in early summer, where they'll be sharing more details of the finds and discussing how we can interpret them. Keep an eye out for more details.

“

We're really excited about what the archaeologists are finding and have already made changes to our plans based on these discoveries.

Abi Morris, Gateway Visitor Experience and Interpretation Manager



Archaeological finds shape educational experiences

Budding archaeologists of all ages have been joining us for site tours, school trips and finds sessions.

The history within our landscape is a large part of the environmental education offer here at Earth Trust – we've been using this special place to tell stories of how our predecessors lived and worked here for many years. However, these digs have given us even more of an insight into the past, and have offered children and adults a unique experience as they've been able to get hands on with the finds. For children who may have been learning about Iron Age or Roman people in classrooms, seeing real items that belonged to them or evidence of the structures they lived in encourages a connection across the centuries.

Katie, age 12, took part in some of the extra activities we were able to offer: *"I was really getting into archaeology and we found the dig at Earth Trust. I've done both the artefact handling and the dig site tour. The dig site was cool because I really liked seeing the items coming out of the ground."*

Katie's dad Pete said: *"For my budding archaeologist daughter it has been great to find a dig locally that we can visit. Both events have been really inspiring and she has booked on to do more archaeology at the Earth Trust."*

As the archaeological dig starts drawing to a close, we're working closely with DigVentures' Education Team to create resources that tell the story of this place based on the artefacts and buildings discovered. The continuing narrative from the archaeology will be reflected in both the Gateway Programme and in the teaching we deliver to school groups, providing even richer experiences for visitors.

See back page for details of ways you can still get involved with the dig.



“The archaeology project over the past three months has been a wonderful opportunity to bring history alive - the children visiting have been able to stand on the very ground where they can see our Iron Age and Roman ancestors stood, slept, cooked and farmed.”

Jenny Creese, Head of Environmental Education

DigVentures' Indie Jago with fragments of an Iron Age pot

Your thoughts

Thank you to everyone who completed the survey we sent out last year. Your feedback has helped us identify what matters most to you, what we're doing well, and where we can improve.

- » More than half of you support Earth Trust because we're an environmental charity, with our woodland management and access to green spaces also rating highly.
- » Most of you enjoy receiving this newsletter as a benefit, but indicated that we could improve on how we update you with Earth Trust news. Exclusive Friend events were less popular, so we'll continue to review the events we're offering.
- » Many of you also responded with ideas for the Friends programme. A common theme was that you're looking for a greater sense of community and involvement in the charity.

With your feedback in mind, we're launching a Friends column in the newsletter. You'll be able to share your thoughts and experiences of Earth Trust as a Friend with other Friends. Perhaps a photo from a walk that you've recently discovered, an opinion piece on how we connect with the world around us, or you'd like to share some local knowledge that adds to the picture being painted as we learn more from our archaeological digs. If you'd like to contribute please email no more than 200 words and/or your favourite images to supportus@earthtrust.org.uk by 31st July 2020, and we'll pick the best to include in the autumn edition.

Please look out for our next survey later in the year as we continue to build on these results and make sure we're delivering the Earth Trust experience you expect from us.

Farm Step focus

Rachel and Fraser, the brains behind Norton & Yarrow Cheese, make their award-winning products right here on the Earth Trust Farm. Here, Rachel shares one of her favourite goat's cheese recipes - it's quick to prepare, and served as a sharing dish gets everyone round the table for lunch.

Roasted veg with Norton & Yarrow goat's cheese

Prep time: 10-15 minutes

Cooking time: 35-50 minutes

Serves: 4 (but easy to bulk up with more veg if you're feeding a crowd)

You will need:

- 1 round of goat's cheese
- 2 sweet potatoes
- 2 red onions
- 3 peppers (mix of red and yellow)
- 1 aubergine
- 2-3 garlic cloves
- Olive oil
- Handful of thyme or dried rosemary
- Salt and pepper to season
- Crusty bread to serve

Chop the potatoes, onions, peppers and aubergine roughly into 2cm cubes and peel and crush the garlic. Then toss all of the veg in olive oil with the rosemary or thyme, and season well. Cook on high (gas 7 or 220°C) for 20 mins, stir and cook for another 10-20 mins until just cooked through. Add chunks of goat's cheese all over the top and cook for a further 5-10 mins. Serve warm with crusty bread.

To find out where your nearest supplier is visit nortonandyarrow.co.uk



Did you know?

There is evidence of caprids being kept at Earth Trust 2,000 years ago!

Save the date!

Lambing Festival

21st, 22nd, 28th & 29th March 2020

10am – 4pm / £9 adult, £6 child, £26 family (discount for online tickets)

Come along to our annual festival and get behind-the-scenes access to our working farm. Meet some of our Farm Step tenants and their animals, including new-born lambs, piglets and goats. There will also be hands-on activities to learn about farming in the past, as well as an opportunity to be the first to try out our virtual reality experience! Poem Tree Cafe will be serving jacket potatoes, cakes and hot/cold drinks.

Friends' hour at Lambing

Friends with a valid ticket for **Saturday 21st March** can get access from 10am, giving you a whole hour to visit the lambing shed and meet the farmers before gates open to the general public. We'd be delighted if you could then join us for complimentary coffee and cake afterwards.

Community Dig

21st-29th March 2020

Times and prices vary

Be an archaeologist for the day! A unique opportunity to get your hands dirty on a real excavation. Work alongside experts from DigVentures at Dig Experience (for adults) and Dig Camp (for families).

Supporters' Day

25th June 2020

5.30pm – 7.30pm / Free

Friends, volunteers and donors are invited to join us for our annual Supporter's Day. As well as the traditional Rose Ceremony, where Oxfordshire County Council presents Earth Trust with a rose as peppercorn rent for the public access we grant to our green spaces, it's an opportunity for us to thank you for your ongoing support. Look out for your invitation in the coming weeks.

Macbeth

7th July 2020

From 6pm / Earlybird offer: £14 adult, £10 child

The HandleBards return with their unique take on another Shakespearean classic. Join the all-female troupe in the Earth Trust Centre garden for some 'gloriously eccentric' outdoor theatre. Earlybird tickets on sale now.

Find out more and book online:
earthtrust.org.uk/events



www.earthtrust.org.uk

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