



*Langdyke*   
STORIES

# Art Pop-Up



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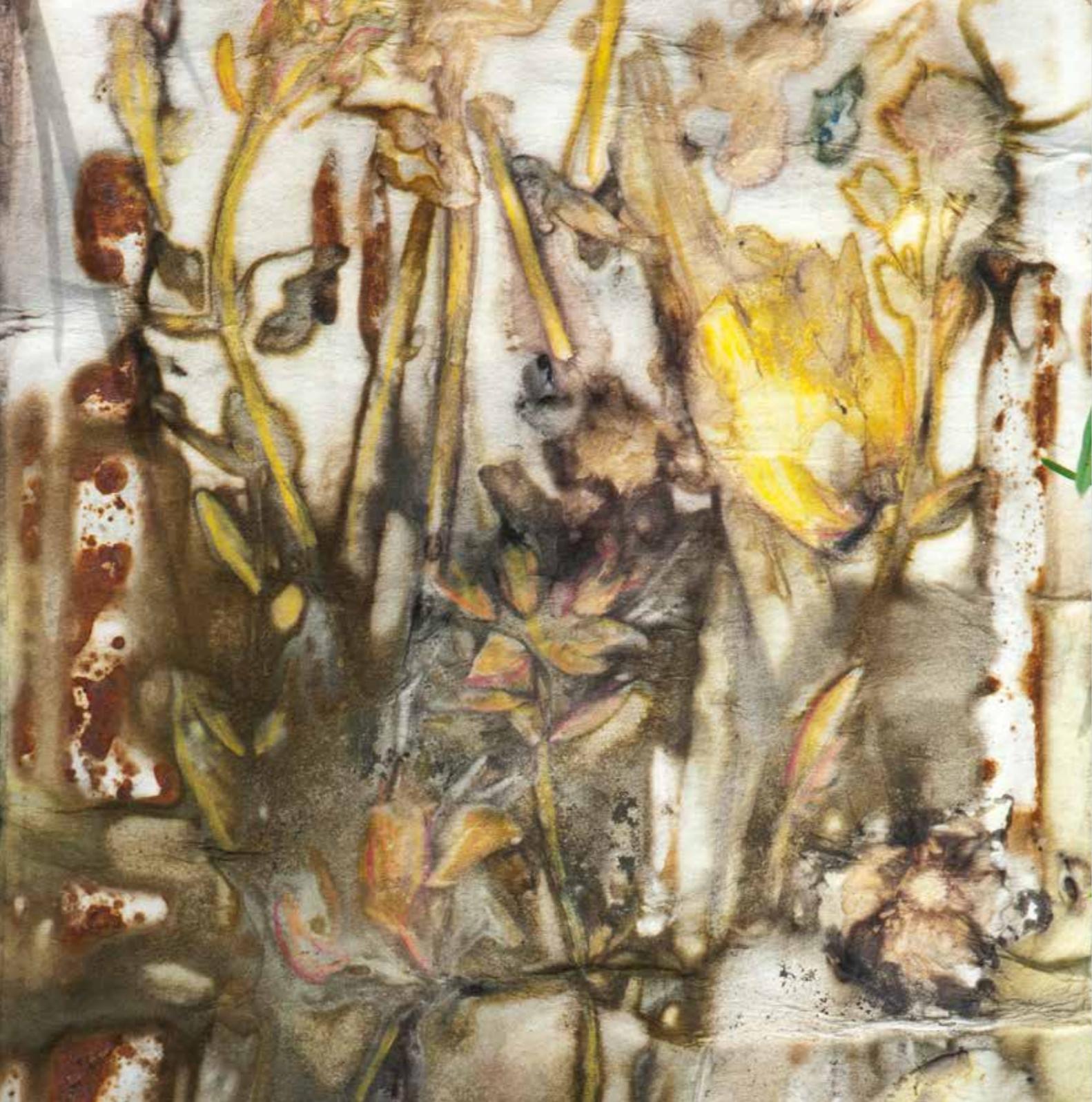
#PeterboroughTogether

# Langdyke STORIES

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Celebrating 20 years of the Langdyke Countryside Trust

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## *Introduction*

Memories, moments, recollections and reflections: these are the stories that we have collated to tell the tale of Langdyke.

From the origins of this fight for nature to bringing Langyke's land and the conservation campaign to the forefront locally as the Langdyke family grows, *Langdyke Stories* celebrates our connections with nature, heritage, culture and community.

*Swaddywell Meadow Triptych*  
**Kathryn Parsons**  
ecoprint on paper, 2019 (detail)



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*We want to  
live in an area  
where nature is  
at the heart of  
our lives...*

Where swifts and swallows are a central feature of our summer evenings, where otters continue to enthral people as they play in the Maxey Cut, where bees and other insects thrive, not decline, and where there are far more, not less, ponds, meadows, wild flowers, hedgerows and trees. And where local people can walk or cycle out in safety and tranquillity across this thriving countryside, enjoying the sights and sounds and even the silence of the natural world; enjoying dark skies and cherishing the heritage - both natural and man-made- around them.



## Foreword

*Langdyke Stories* celebrates our arts engagement project with Art Pop-Up on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Trust. Here, for the first time, we tell the story of the Langdyke Countryside Trust through the voice of its members and the medium of art, sharing the work of our Artist in Residence and over 300 people from our local community, inspired - as were our founders - by the beauty and diversity of the natural world around us.

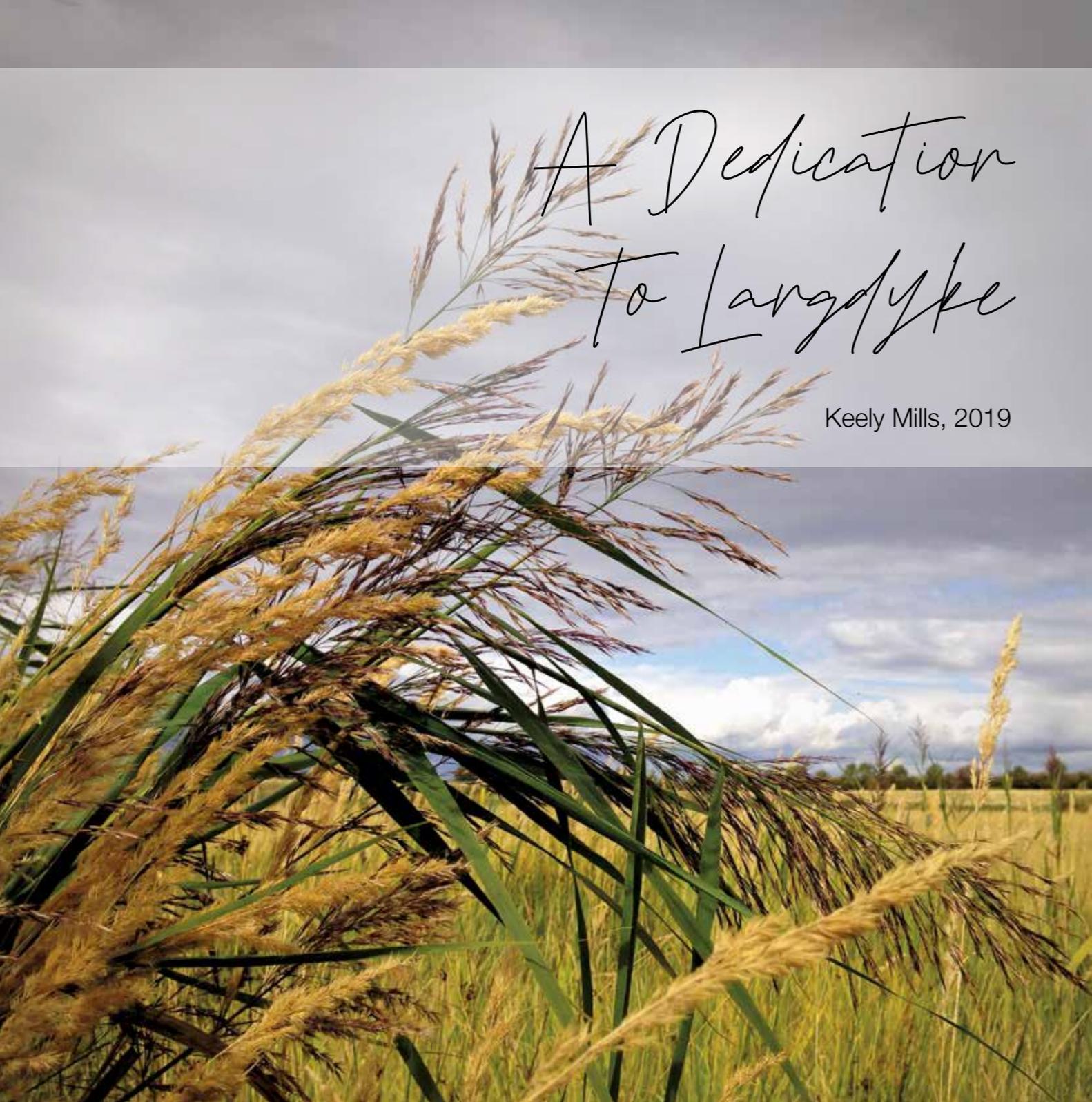
Back in 1999 four local people set up Langdyke with the intention of starting the long-term reversal of years of environmental decline by acquiring and managing land for nature. Two decades later, we now have seven nature reserves and the active support of 130 households. We hold weekly work-parties and monthly talks and walks.

Nature is responding on our reserves. Turtle dove, lapwings and redshanks breed again at Etton Maxey Pits, Swaddywell Pit is alive with wild-flowers, butterflies and dragonflies, with rare species returning. Torpel Manor Field is recovering its floral diversity. The Trust has planted a community orchard and runs community allotments at Etton High Meadow and in 2018 acquired its first area of wet-woodland at Vergette Wood Meadow. We now even have a road-side meadow at Marholm Field Bank!

The original four members are still part of the Trust – but the Trust also now has four resident-led geographic groups that drive its work forward. This is important, throughout its history, Langdyke has been an organisation rooted in its neighbourhoods, led by the local volunteers who run its committees and manage its reserves - working with and for the community. As we plan to expand our reserves and to take forward ambitious plans for the recovery of nature across the wider John Clare countryside, we will not lose sight of this key feature of our success.

Langdyke is a story to be proud of and one that we hope more and more people will join and be associated with in our third decade. A heartfelt thank you to all our members, and particularly our active volunteers who have made it happen.

Richard Astle, Chair



# A Dedication To Langdyke

Keely Mills, 2019

I'm Swaddywell a piece of land.  
My sweet breath is Vergette Wood Meadow.  
Bainton Heath, my reaching left hand.  
Torpel, is where my wild thoughts grow.  
My buzzing ears are listening in Etton Maxey.  
Marholm Field Bank are my outstretched fingers.  
Etton High Meadow, where my right foot stands.  
Over Langdyke my words linger.

My body holds sediments of history.  
Romans camped the ninth legion on my banks.  
Leaving me, their fate became a mystery.  
None knows where the eagle standard sank.  
Rodger De Torpel came, renamed my earth after him.  
Built a home then lost the key for five hundred years.  
He gave six knights to serve on the Bishops whim.  
I cried when traces of this Norman lord disappeared.

Time has burnt itself in centuries of smoke.  
My manor has crumbled into ruined demise.  
My use was felled like an old oak.  
No more would my blossom clasp butterflies.  
Then. Swaddywell turned pit with crushing chisels.  
Chipping, at my body till a hollow quarry was left.  
Birdsong blasted by workman whistles.  
I became nature's victim with industrial theft.

They worked me till I could not stand.  
Sold my branches and roots.  
They picked the bones of my green land.  
Broke the cowslip, ripped meadow fruits.  
Left me lost in the sand, grit and stones.  
I gasped for air through the desolation.  
My hills became skulls and crossbones.  
My spirit was lost to man made creation.

I thought this was my eternity.  
Then. O' Langley bush did rise again.  
A poet's beloved tree heard my cry.

This mound of a hundred fighting men.  
The union of nature and passionate eyes.  
Reclaimed, my washed out earth.  
Brought me back from the dust.  
Fervent beings who believed in my rebirth.  
Called themselves 'The Langdyke Trust'.

Once again my fields are calm,  
My arms outstretched in tranquil grace.  
Resurrected meadow browns fly in my palms.  
Turtle doves have returned to my embrace.  
Cuckoos now sing all the wrong words.  
Over the tops of hobby hunts, eating on the wing.  
Slowly I am turning the tide on declining birds.  
Hearing nightingales in May, hum and sing.

I thank those who give their time,  
Protecting me, bringing me back to life.  
My gratitude are the rare orchids in summertime.  
Purple signs of flowering pride.  
My bliss are the playing otters of Maxey Cut,  
Coats shiny like wet pebbles, coloured chestnut.  
See my soul in the tender water vole,  
It stares at the stars and the grizzled skipper.  
Relax with resting lizards on benches in the sun's gold.  
Hear my thanks in the swifts on the twilight flicker.

I say to you all.  
Let my body be the proof with its many wild flowers.  
And its swallows that chip, whine and gurgle down to us.  
That, if cherished a land can be saved from the brink.  
If loved a land will create magic in the dark stardust.  
If secured a land shall be where all men can calmly think.  
So, I pray I will always flourish in this cradle of trust.  
I'm Swaddywell a rekindled piece of land.  
Brought back to flourishing being in only twenty years.  
Now in near destiny I stand with my guardians hand in hand.  
Continuing to grow hopeful plots in all nature's spheres.

# Happy Birthday Langdyke

It is twenty years since the formation of Langdyke. Here we take a look at that journey, the many achievements, and what the future holds for nature and the Trust.

**1999** Spurred on by the planning battle over the future of Swaddywell Pit, Helpston, four local residents set up Langdyke Countryside Trust with the specific intention of reversing decades of habitat and species loss, to celebrate and conserve our natural world.

For the first six years after its foundation, the Trust owns no land and has no members! It helps with local hedge planting and conservation work. It puts up nest boxes in Rice Wood, near Helpston and organises nature walks for its small band of supporters.

Swaddywell Pit is at the heart of the Trust's plans for the future. The site was listed in Sir Charles Rothschild's 1912 list of key places for nature across the country, along with the Thames Estuary and St Kilda. It was

one of the first nature reserves in the UK, listed in 1915 but then reverted to quarrying in 1924, becoming a WW2 bomb dump and then a landfill site in the 1980s. In 1997 it was used as a VW racetrack, but local opposition thwarted further plans for the circuit and the site was abandoned. The Trust makes plans to turn the site into a nature reserve but new legislation on liabilities for potential pollution makes it difficult to take these forward without undue risk.

**2005** Concerns over potential liabilities are resolved, Langdyke agrees to rent Swaddywell Pit and establishes its first reserve. Volunteers from neighbouring villages start to reclaim the land for wildlife: removing tyres and scraping up rubbish, planting hedges, cleaning out the ponds, clearing bramble, fencing the site,



*The list of species in steep decline across our region is long, sad and worrying. Iconic rural birds such as the cuckoo and the turtle dove have disappeared from many areas. Hedgehogs too are increasingly rarely seen, their population cut in half. The list goes on, nationally brown hare numbers are down by 80 per cent, swifts down by 50 per cent, 75 per cent of butterfly species are in decline.*

introducing sheep and cutting paths.

**2006** Langdyke works with Froglife's Bridges to Nature project to help people understand more about local reptiles and amphibians.

**2007** The Trust tries unsuccessfully to purchase Pickworth Quarry, home of a former lime kiln and workplace of John Clare.

**2009** A year of land acquisition as the Trust goes from having one reserve to four! Torpel Manor Field at the end of West Street, Helpston is purchased and then Bainton Heath is established as our third reserve, this time in partnership with National Grid. Bainton is another former quarry, covered in rubble from the London bomb sites and ash from power stations that create a unique habitat. It is home to a diverse range of insects, mosses and liverworts as well as a population of nightingales.

Langdyke also enters into a management agreement with Tarmac to look after the restored gravel pits between Etton and Maxey, north of the Maxey Cut. This is the Trust's largest reserve, a combination of wet meadows and wildflower banks, with potential to attract a wide range of breeding and wintering birds and populations of orchids and butterflies. It is also a RIGS site (Regionally Important Geological Site) due to the fossil-rich and complex interglacial

deposits.

**2005** Langdyke and the Wildlife Trusts set up the John Clare Countryside partnership to help deliver more habitats for nature across the wider countryside.

It is the 20th consecutive year of bird ringing at Bainton Heath, making it one of the longest running and most productive sites within the BTO (British Trust for Ornithology) "Constant Effort Sites" scheme.

**2011** Etton High Meadow becomes Langdyke's fourth reserve. The land was originally, pre-enclosures, part of common land north of Etton - an area of wet meadows beside the river. As the river was gradually channelled, the land dried and became arable land, probably during WW2. This small site is surrounded with hedges and provides grazing for the Trust's sheep as well as a home for many farmland birds. There is also a large barn, a useful space for storing machinery and tools.

**2012** Thanks to a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, work starts on an ambitious project to unlock the secrets of Torpel Field, the location of a Norman manor house and medieval hamlet. A Heritage Lottery grant allows us to create a visitor cabin and exhibition as well as partnering with the University of York on a research project. Many local

*Nature wins.*

2011

**Bainton Heath:** invertebrate survey finds 64 Nationally Scarce and 6 species that are listed in the UK's Red Data Book of endangered species. A survey of the mosses, liverworts and lichens finds a total of 85 species, some of which are rare in this area.

**Etton Maxey:** first tern raft launch. Terns like to lay their eggs on small 'islands' in an attempt to keep their young safe from land-based predators. The raft is a great success as a pair of terns find it, nest and three young terns hatch and fledge.

2012

**Etton Maxey:** an osprey appears. First seen in July, it returns for the reserve's open day in August, sitting on a telephone pole for nearly an hour. Bee orchids are found for the first time.

**Swaddywell:** reptiles survey finds 29 adult common lizards and 37 juveniles, as well as grass snakes and great crested newts.

2013

**Etton High Meadow:** a new heritage orchard is planted with many native & heritage species including medlars and spindle trees.

people are involved, learning how to conduct geophysical surveys, taking part in field walks and digging pits to discover the historic treasures beneath the ground. We celebrate with summer festivals, full of music, poetry, nature and drama in 2011 and 2012 and annual heritage workshops.

The Trust appoints View5 as Artists in Residence across its reserves for a two-year period. The local artists create a number of works based on the reserves and hold events and exhibitions at Swaddywell and Torpel.

**2015** Langdyke launches its vision for the future of the local countryside – a place where people and nature thrive together. Land at Etton High Meadow is made available for community allotments, close to Langdyke's heritage orchard. There are 6 allotments for local Langdyke members.

**2017** The Trust sets up a new geographic group, centred in Castor and Ailsworth, to take forward projects in that area. Marholm Field Bank is surveyed as part of a much wider survey of the land surrounding Castor and Ailsworth.

The 'Friends of Barnack Hills and Holes' join us to become our fourth geographical group, rebranding as 'Langdyke Ermine Street'. Their knowledgeable, enthusiastic

members boost our ranks, and in addition to conservation work, they host pasque flowers and glow-worm walks. Their support facilitates projects such as our new website and dedicated email addresses.

**2018** In September we meet with Highways England, owner of Marholm Field Bank. They have no idea that it is their land! Forgotten since its creation during the build of the Castor bypass in 1989/90 it hosts a plethora of wildflowers at risk from scrub invasion. We enter into another management agreement, with Kier and Highways England, to manage this small meadow just off the A47, home to butterflies, moths and flowers.

We establish our third 'Eastern' reserve, Vergette Wood Meadow just north of the South Drain, outside Etton. Another former gravel pit, it has a similar history to Etton High Meadow. Our plans are to manage it as a wildflower meadow and wet-woodland. The three eastern reserves are looked after by another team of volunteers who meet weekly, taking on tasks as diverse as running small allotments, launching tern rafts or organising community events.

Langdyke enters a partnership with Natural England to help manage the national nature reserves at Barnack Hills and Holes and Castor Hanglands. The Trust also completes its legal reorganisation into a Charitable Interest Organisation.

2013

**Swaddywell:** *the first grizzled skipper butterfly is seen at Swaddywell for over 20 years. The following year the species is seen again on several occasions, as well as burnet companion moth and dingy skippers.*

2014

**Swaddywell:** *a new discovery of 12 man orchids is made.*

2015

**Bainton Heath:** *bird ringing results include a long tailed tit who is recaptured after first being ringed at the same site in 2007, making him almost 8 years old - the national longevity record is just under 9 years!*

2016

**Etton Maxey:** *130 lapwing are counted, also Cetti's warblers, water rails and some 80 snipe, plus a pectoral sandpiper, a rare visitor to the UK, occasionally blown across from the east coast of America!*

**Swaddywell:** *187 great crested newts are counted on 25th March.*

2017

**Etton Maxey:** *water voles are reported and a harvest mouse nest is discovered.*

2018

**Bainton Heath & Etton High Meadow:** *small mammal survey finds pygmy shrews. These tiny creatures are less than 11cm long (including the tail) and weigh just 2-6g.*

**Vergette Meadow:** *small mammal survey finds both common and water shrews which are the largest UK shrew, they have large hind feet and swim underwater to catch their prey.*

2019

**Vergette Wood Meadow:** *volunteers plant young elm trees, carefully sourced they will hopefully prove to be disease resistant.*

**Etton Maxey:** *common lizards are found after a gap of several years. Several four-spotted moths are seen - there are only 12 breeding colonies in the UK so it is hoped they will make a home on the reserve. There are also breeding redshank, six young turtle doves being raised and a purple heron visits briefly.*

**Swaddywell:** *the reserve has 8 species of orchid, including 2 found nowhere else locally and a nationally rare one, as well as over 1200 species of invertebrate, including the scarce and beautiful grizzled skipper.*

2019

Langdyke is becoming embedded in the community with a core of regular committee members and volunteers without whom the Trust could not manage its reserves. A much wider group join us for walks with a growing number of supporters attending events. We launch an engagement programme with Art Pop-Up, *Langdyke Stories*, to bring Langdyke to a wider community through the medium of art.

January's inaugural wassailing event at Etton High Meadow attracts over 100 visitors – young and old - and May's nightingale walk around Castor Hanglands attracts more than 70 local people. In June, Langdyke celebrates its 20th birthday with nearly 200 people at events at Torpel and Etton Maxey Pits.

As we enter our 21st year, the Trust is flourishing. It currently manages seven nature reserves in the area, ranging from the 80-acre Etton Maxey Pits to the 2-acre meadow at Marholm Field Bank, by the A47. It has 130 household memberships, runs a flock of more than 100 sheep and offers members a variety of weekly events, including work-parties, country walks, training sessions and talks.

Nature is thriving on all our reserves.

Swaddywell is no longer a waste ground, it is a place of calm and tranquillity, full of flowers and butterflies in the summer

and wetland and farmland birds throughout the year. Every week a determined and passionate team of volunteers gather on the reserve and, together with a resident flock of Hebridean sheep, manage the site for nature and for people.

At Etton High Meadow the orchard is growing up slowly and dragonflies have colonised the new pond. It is used as a paddock for the sheep flock, community allotments and has become an oasis for wildlife - a mosaic of habitats to encourage original local species.

At Bainton Heath, nightingales sing from the scrub, rare butterflies and moths thrive in the grassland while summer migrants, such as cuckoo and hobby hunt overhead.

## The future

The reality remains that while nature is doing well on the reserves, it is struggling across the wider countryside. How would we feel if a walk along the Maxey Cut isn't enlivened by hares playing in the fields or there are no swifts screaming over the villages in the summer? What if our children really do grow up never seeing a hedgehog? Or hearing a cuckoo? Is that the countryside we want?

We are currently working with a range of partners and landowners to take forward a very positive vision for the future of our area.



*King Street*  
**Carry Akroyd**  
 watercolour, 2009

The prompt for this watercolour was one of John Clare's Northborough Sonnets from the 1830's which begins, "Sketch Lolham brigs..."

In the poem, Clare describes the view from "That aged tree..." meaning Langley Bush, from where he can "map the prospect of a hundred miles": Langley Bush Road turns into King Street. Clare mentions also "swordy well", now Swaddywell, and being able to spot church spires.

The Roman road leads the eye in the picture past the sites known to Clare and rescued by Langdyke Trust: Swaddywell and Torpel Field. Willows mark Bainton Pits, Lolham Bridges and Helpston spire.

## Clare Country

by Cardinal Cox

When he was a young lad John Clare  
 Searched to find the edge of the world  
 Where he might look into clear air  
 That void where angels were once hurled

But all these fields, woods, moor and fen  
 Are not edge but its very heart  
 These lands have long been worked by men  
 Developed by the farmers art

The many snails, plants, bugs and birds  
 Are owners, not us, of this land  
 We're only tenants, hear his words  
 Of care to actions of our hands

One day our lease we must return  
 To those landlords, this we must learn



# Moments on our reserves

When we decided to focus our efforts on procuring the Swaddywell site, I remember peering over the edge of the quarry, at the previous owner's parties; worrying about the stone works next door sucking out water from the pond; concerns about a new road being built down to the quarry; piles of clay pigeons from the club shooting over the quarry; the main car park being used as a storage area by the stone works. But I remember too some of the positive actions we took including hedge planting,

cleaning out the ponds with a huge digger then worrying about water levels, clearing bramble, fencing the site and introducing sheep and cattle grazing in 2005, cutting paths and banks on our little tractor, newt counts and much more. So many people have been able to enjoy the wildlife there ever since.

*Rick Keymer*

*The sheep have their own logic  
and way of doing things, sometimes  
it's hard to guess what it is!*

Swaddywell

Etton Maxey is full of life - and memories - for me... especially since I started helping on work parties and helping look after the sheep. I love to watch the sheep - our conservation-grazers - and try to work out what's going through their minds...

To me it is a place to breathe... a place to wander and watch the seasons change, to notice our native wildlife and learn about the creatures and the plants from others on the work parties, or while sitting in the hide. It is a precious place.

*Kathryn Parsons*

I have a friend who bemoans the loss of genuine fen-edge landscape - meadows, dotted with trees, watered by ditches, big skies...yet all these are present at Etton Maxey Pits, with a bonus that the sunken situation creates an almost natural artificial horizon, shutting out the surrounding arable desert of ploughed flat fields.

I see this open landscape as a palate for huge blocks of colour, different throughout the seasons, swirling round the whole reserve. Autumn and winter shows a seething mass of grey/brown, as the reed beds rustle in the wind and lay out the paths of

the ditches across the reserve. In late spring the western banks come alive with white slopes of ox-eye daisy encircling the lake. Then early summer brings the purple haze of pyramidal orchids down the slope from the quarry roadway and across North Wood. By late summer the reeds show again, but this time dark green, and share the meadows with great pink swathes of calamagrostis grass. And this is the backdrop upon which to overlay whatever natural life appears at the time, one hopes searching for and finding room here to thrive.

*David Cowcill*

Etton Maxey

There are so many memorable moments from my time as a Langdyke volunteer but my favourite was when volunteers and allotmenters came together for a social event a couple of summers ago. It was a relaxed barbeque at Etton High Meadow which we thought would last just a couple of hours. In fact the combination of good company, delicious barbequed food including local sausages and home grown courgettes and warm evening summer sunshine ensured everyone lingered a lot longer!

*Keren Thomson*

I took early retirement from journalism and wanted to do something totally different away from the deadlines and pressures of newspapers and websites. Langdyke - and High Meadow, in particular - have given me that opportunity. My new life involves a wide variety of tasks - among them digging, chopping down willow, mending fences, chasing sheep and just admiring the countryside I'm so lucky to be part of.

*David Rowell*



*It is where I retreat to,  
to escape the pressures  
of modern life*



Bainton is known for its interesting fungi. Including earthstars. On an early February guided walk around the reserve we came across a pile of logs under the big pylon. They were covered, all over, with scarlet elfcup fungi, *Sarcoscypha austriaca*. I have seen this pretty fungus, which often appears in winter and spring, in Derbyshire, but was completely unprepared for such a stunning display: quality and quantity.

*Jean Stowe*

Bainton has a magical quality, perhaps because it is so rarely visited. In the spring there's always a chance of hearing a nightingale, cuckoo, or even the gentle purring of a turtle dove. I never fail to

see a fox or a deer who stare in amazement to find people there. And yet because of its history you can also find the remains of a British Rail cup or a few bricks from bombed out London.

We don't work to beautify, just to maintain its wilderness and give nature a helping hand.

*Sue Welch*

Bainton Heath is one of my most favourite places on Earth. At first sight it may not look much, just a scrubby patch of wasteland but for me it is a sanctuary. Bainton is a wild place, there are no paths across the site - just deer tracks which I follow, never quite knowing where I might end up; there are no seats to sit on - just fallen trees,

which are just as comfortable. There is dense hawthorn scrub where you can see no further than the next bush and other areas where you can gaze across the fields to the distant horizon.

In the summer the whole place is bursting with life, clouds of butterflies and blue damselflies rise up, on every flower there are bees, hoverflies and soldier beetles, over the ponds you can see dragonflies and kingfishers, whilst overhead buzzards and swifts call. Bainton is not a large reserve but without fail I discover something new every time I visit. The place is always surprising and delighting me.

*Stuart Irons*



*Like everyone else, I was  
curious about its mysterious  
humps and bumps*

# Torpe! Field

I was involved with Torpe! Manor Field from its acquisition and the Heritage Lottery grant allowed us to collaborate with the Archaeology Department at York University to investigate it. Over four seasons our volunteers and the professionals carried out topographical, resistivity and magnetometry surveys. The results were analysed and maps produced showing the extent and evolution of the manor and the likely distribution of its former buildings. We also researched the Torpe! and Camoys families and the settlement and farming systems of the Norman and medieval periods. And so *Torpe! Manor: the Biography of a Landscape* was published along with the building, fitting out and educational materials of the “cabin”

*Frieda Gosling*

I was asked to produce maps and diagrams for the Langdyke book on Torpe!. Amongst the documents was an original of the 1620 schedule on the state of land and buildings around the manor. The first page simply said ‘Torpe!’, I was immediately excited by its artistry and antiquity as a 400 year old title probably produced by a monk for much earlier manorial documents. I drew it digitally in order to trace it exactly, so it could be reproduced. York University who were collaborating on the book also decided it was a very important symbol and it features on the frontispiece.

*Peter Leverington*

For me, Vergette Wood Meadow in June is the epitome of what the countryside should look like. A thick hedgerow down the middle, surrounded by a sea of flowers – the yellow of the hawksbeard creating a stream of colour all the way down the bank of the South Drain. And if you walk through the meadow, up fly the insects – butterflies, moths and beetles. It’s what Langdyke is all about – bringing the countryside back to life.

*Richard Astle*

*Essentially it is  
a field alive with  
nature*

On an early April morning I was searching through the wet wood from the footpath through the pit complex to discover what wildfowl were present. Large areas are covered with willows making viewing fairly difficult but a number of dabbling ducks usually mallards, teals and gadwalls are present in varying numbers with occasional shovelers, together with little grebes which breed in good numbers on the site. Through the willows I momentarily glimpse the head of a small duck with a distinctive white eye stripe. I knew immediately that it must be a garganey. This is uniquely a summer visiting duck which winters in Africa and is a rare bird locally. I erected my telescope and spent a happy time scanning the area and eventually established that there were 2 males and 1 female as well as a number of shovelers hiding amongst the willows.

*Bob Titman*



# Vergette Wood Meadow

*A fellow Langdyke member told me of the hidden gems discovered there quite by accident*

Pete and I first discovered the site in July 2017. Having spotted pyramidal orchids on the verge, we ventured into the plantation and were amazed to find a beautiful wildflower meadow on the far side - a riot of pink, purple and yellow from orchids, betony, bird's-foot-trefoil and marjoram. Probably the most flower-rich area of grassland I've ever seen, this natural gem is a valuable wildlife refuge.

*Sarah Lambert*

When passing by I had thought Marholm Field Bank was simply a small copse of trees, but I was very wrong! Scrub had managed to cover a lot of the ground, there were still some astounding displays of wildflowers, and some green hairstreak butterflies floating around. I knew something had to be done to prevent the scrub completely taking over. With the hard work of around 20 enthusiastic souls, we made great inroads in just one day in November

2018 . A second work party completed the work the following January and I was intrigued to see what spring and summer would bring forth. I was not to be disappointed, and the displays of hundreds of pyramidal orchids, ox eye daisy, wild basil and a dozen or more other wildflowers has been spectacular. This has fast become one of my very favourite places.

*Mike Horne*



Here's a field outside a village  
Green and quiet, mostly grass  
Shrugging off the buzzing pylons  
Offering up its busy past.

Here's a walking place for autumn's  
Seeds and toadstools, rustling trees.  
Fuzzy cattle graze the pasture  
Flowers will spring to feed the bees.

Here's a pool, a pond, a haven  
Still and dim and full of life  
Wriggling things below the surface  
Hunt and eat in tiny strife.

Here's a lumpy, bumpy quarry  
Stones now gone to pierce the sky.  
All is green, with sheep and orchids  
Glow-worms glow and small bats fly.

Places where the rare and fragile,  
Bird or flower, live out their lives  
Newts or snipe or tiger beetles  
Turtle doves and dragonflies  
Welcoming all nature lovers  
To the place where wildlife thrives.

*Held in Trust*  
by Vivian Foster

# Reflections

by Kathryn Parsons,  
Langdyke's Artist in Residence

*Langdyke Stories...* The Langdyke reserves are full of stories... it's what I noticed as soon as I started to talk with any of the Langdyke volunteers. There are the stories of the migrating birds that come back each spring, and the lizards that sun themselves on a bench put out for birdwatchers. There are stories of the sheep that live their whole lives on the reserves, grazing the land and helping the wildflowers by doing so. Some of the stories are mysteries, like the sudden appearance of a solitary lizard orchid and a clump of autumn ladies-tresses orchids at Swaddywell a couple of years ago - miles and miles away from any other plants of their species...

*The intense beauty took  
our breath away and we  
said how glad we were to  
be there to see such a sight*

Many of Langdyke's stories come from time spent working on the reserves, like the January morning at Etton-Maxey when the reeds and trees were covered in an incredible diamond-sparkling hoar-frost.

Then some of the stories of Langdyke's reserves reach far back in time. Thanks to archaeologists in the 1980s, we know that Neolithic families built enclosures, herded sheep and held gatherings at Etton-Maxey! While at Torpel, a Medieval mansion was built, flourished, decayed, and the (possibly) front door key was left behind, to be rediscovered far more recently. And of course two hundred years ago John Clare was recording the stories of this land through his poetry and prose, collecting the tales of the history, wildlife, botany, and everyday happenings of many of the precious places that Langdyke now cares for.

I find the stories of places, their wildlife and their people fascinating.

They are significant too, since knowing some stories of our local area helps us to connect with and care about what's around us. And sharing those stories with others helps more people get to know and to care too, thus building relationships and connections from which stronger communities grow.

All this is why, right from the beginning of this project, I wanted my work as Langdyke's artist in residence to focus on telling some of these Langdyke tales, and for





the project to include as many opportunities for the local community to be involved as possible... And so Art Pop-Up was able to secure the funding from the Peterborough Community Fund, so that working closely with Langdyke we have found many different opportunities to tell people about our amazing local wildlife and history, from workshops

for local community groups to being part of Peterborough Heritage Festival.

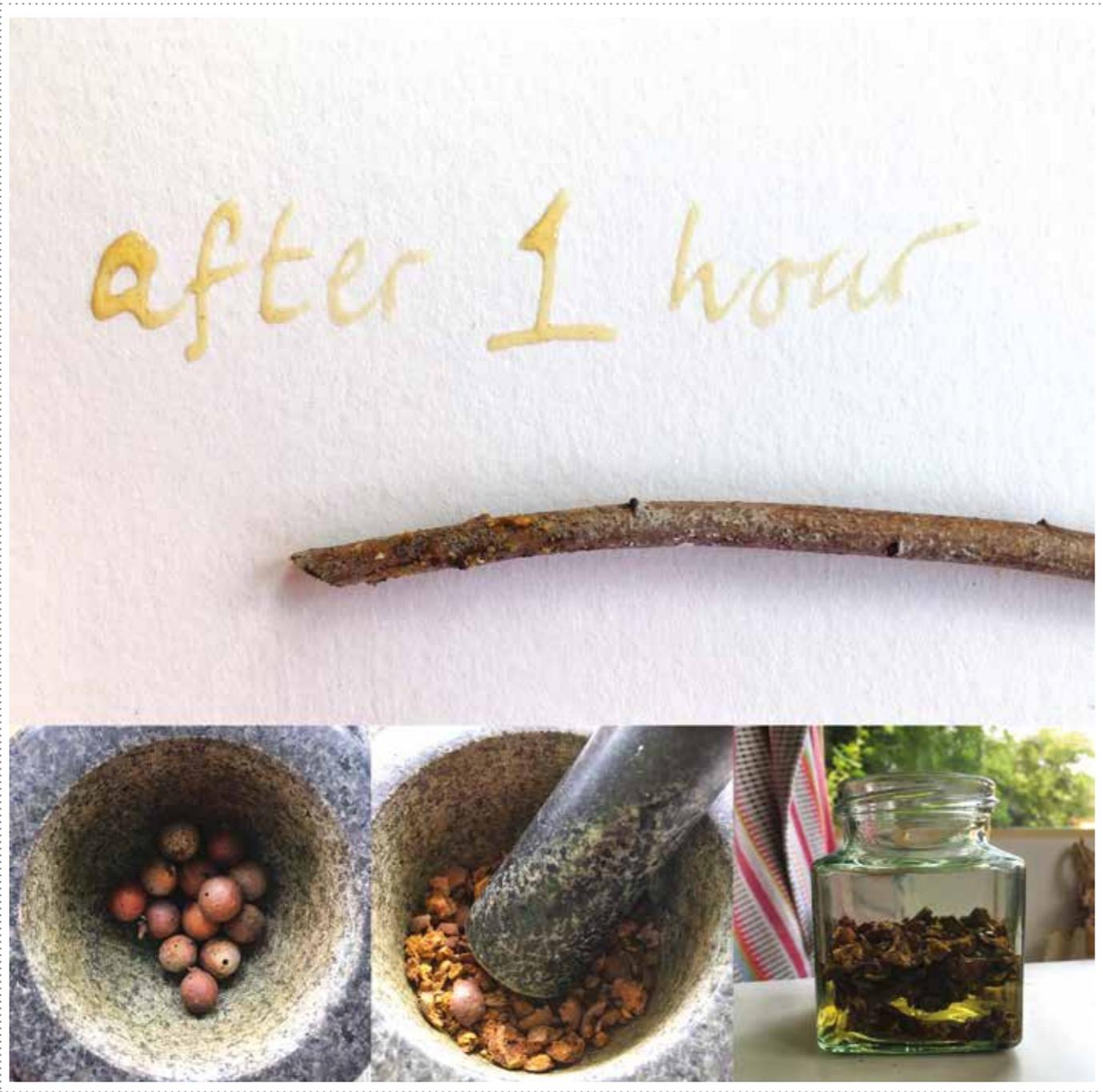
For me, storytelling happens partly through the materials and techniques I choose to work with... John Clare wrote about finding his poems in the fields and simply writing them down. Often he would write on scraps of paper, using ink that he



*Eco-printing is a gentle process that uses heat and time to coax colours and patterns out of fresh leaves and flowers and on to paper or fabric.*







had made himself from local oak galls. So I decided to echo this way of working, using small pieces of paper and eco-printing with plant material that I found on Langdyke's reserves.

Using plants from Langdyke's nature reserves to print with gave a direct contact between the artwork and the places. Sometimes a sprinkling of tea leaves was added too, because Langdyke's work parties always include tea and cake! I used eco-printing for several of my own *Langdyke Stories* artworks, and also for the community artwork that is so central to this project.

My main artwork, *Bainton Heath, Torpel and Swaddywell*, is an eco-printed 'poem'. It tells of the thriving plants and wildlife that live on three of Langdyke's reserves. Visiting these places

I'd also become intrigued by the paths that criss-cross the land, so over the intricate patterns created by the plants I embroidered trackways, wildflowers and foot-paths.

For the Open Day in June the three triptychs were hung on a hazel A-frame, reminiscent of one I'd seen at Langdyke's community allotment... and the eco-prints danced in the wind on that blazing-hot day!

*Wild as summer flowers* used lumen photography as well as eco-prints, combined with sheep-tracks stitched in wool. They were framed and for the Open Day hung in North Wood, a small cluster of young oak trees which is my favourite place at Etton-Maxey reserve. I've got to know this spot over the last few years,



*The stitching relates to the history of these precious places too - a once industrial landscape, the site of a medieval manor and one of Britain's first nature reserves.*

and love the hope and potential that fills those young trees and the carpet of wild flowers that surrounds them. The title is from a poem by John Clare, where he talks of his love of roaming as free and 'wild as summer flowers'.

It's early August as I write, and I'm currently working on the final artwork for *Langdyke Stories*... if all goes well it'll be made of leaves from the reserves, patterned by sunlight and images from the project. This piece doesn't have a name yet, but I want it to reflect the whole community of Langdyke - the Langdyke 'family'

that encompasses the wildlife, botany, and also the community of supporters and volunteers that are at the heart of all that happens. Take the turtle doves for instance; last year one of the volunteers heard about a nation-wide project to put out food for them to eat. In this country, the numbers of this elegant little bird have crashed by over 90% since the 1970s.

The reasons for this decline are complex, but one significant factor is insufficient food to raise their young. And so a team of six Langdyke volunteers committed to

*You see, without the dedicated of the Langdyke volunteers these precious wildlife places would have less protection, and the species that are being given a helping hand would be having an even harder time surviving.*





*As a direct result of the feeding programme, turtle doves are now at Etton Maxey and six young have been spotted!*

regularly putting out a special seed-mix throughout the late spring and summer. This is just one of the very significant practical differences that Langdyke volunteers make.... and of course the close connection with nature, and working together for something we care about, is good for

people and communities too.

Over three hundred people were involved in our community art project! Although some had heard of Langdyke before, for many this was their first introduction. Each person created their own miniature artwork, starting with a piece of eco-printed



paper and adding patterns, drawings and stamps that tell some of Langdyke's stories. Strung together for the 20th anniversary celebrations, they made wonderful, vibrant story-telling art-bunting!

The art workshops took place at local festivals and community groups.

Often different groups came together with one hosting the workshop and inviting guests along. I'm hugely grateful for the collaborations involved and the enthusiasm to take part! All the sharing of planning, facilities and even equipment (one group lent their projector so another group

could see photographs from the reserves!), along with the workshop story-telling and creating art together has built and strengthened the connections with each other, our local environment, local history and of course with Langdyke too. We're delighted that as a result more



people are coming to Langdyke events, visiting the reserves and that we've been able to welcome some new people to the work parties too! It's good for the wildlife, good for the individuals involved and good for our community, as more people grow and strengthen their connections with our local environment and with each other.

I hope that *Langdyke Stories* inspires you to get to know more of Langdyke's stories of the wildlife, history and places, and to share these stories with others... to visit the reserves, join in events, support in whatever way you can, and by doing so to become a part of the story of these special places yourself.

*Kathryn*

*The community around Langdyke is growing and that is very good...*



*The Ghost Moths of Swaddywell*  
Anita Bruce  
View 5 Artist in Residence, 2012

This series of wire and felt cocoons was inspired by the natural history of Swaddywell Quarry. Moths have a subtle beauty that often mimics their environment. The pupae are felted from the fleece of the Jacobs sheep that graze Swaddywell, maintaining optimum conditions for the flora and fauna. They are embroidered with patterns found in this environment, representing hypothetical species of moths following their cycle of life at Swaddywell, which has a history of intervention by man and is now a celebration of nature.

# Langdyke MUSEUM of Objects

This collection has been submitted by Langdyke Countryside Trust members, participants in the *Langdyke Stories* project and the local community following an Open Call.

The museum collates some of the treasured objects of our Langdyke community, items that tell a story and inspire their connection to the land and nature we protect.

*Our treasured connections to Langdyke*



**The seeds of the Oxlip**

*Mike Davis*

In 1984 I was inspired by a gardener called Chris Baines to garden for wildlife. Before then I was no gardener. I found the natural history of the oxlip interesting, so decided to learn to grow the plant for myself. I was amazed that seedlings grew.

That was in my first small garden behind a Victorian terrace in Leicester. In 2019 I still have Oxlips growing here in my Lincolnshire garden. The "true oxlip" was not identified until the 1840's and grows on chalk-clay soil, in woodland and damp field-edge or ditch sides - all characteristics of our John Clare countryside.



**Old coin**

*David Rowell*

The very early days of digging at the Etton High Meadow allotments were tough, the ground had been without attention for years. It was a monotonous routine; forcing a spade into the earth to remove the heavy grass and weeds, then doing battle against the yards of bindweed.

Then, all of a sudden a glint of metal - a coin was nestling in the soil. How had it got there? The find spurred me on, would I discover a trove of treasure? ... I dug wider and deeper... No just the single Long-Cross penny, dating back to 1279 - most likely a coin of Edward I minted in London.



**Tea cards**

*Lynda Cartwright-Hughes*

These are in my first wild flower book, collected from Ty-Phoo tea packets in the 1960s by my Mum.

There are 24 pictures within my book. It is one of my prized possessions and reminds me of many happy times when my parents indulged my developing love of wild flowers such as when my dad waded into water to pick a water blob (marsh marigold) so that I could inspect it close up!



**My binoculars**

*Caroline Cade*

I love to see the birds and nature around me. Also my love of geology made me want to visit Swaddyell so I visit often.

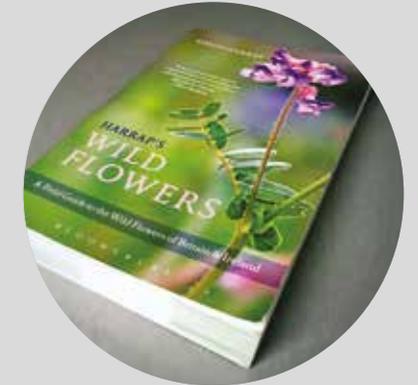


**Feather, oak gall and fossil mollusc**

*Nathan Stimpson*

The fossilised mollusc is from the pathway by Etton-Maxey Pit south hide, where I spend hours observing the natural life: the fossil is 160-170 million years old! The oak gall came from a tree between Langdyke's Etton-Maxey and High Meadow.

As stewards of the natural world, Langdyke Trust try to support the whole natural food chain from the mud through the plants, insects, fish, birds and animals to the top of the chain. A buzzard is near the top - its only enemy man, so when this feather was dropped by a youngster (at Etton Maxey Pit) it reminded me of all the layers to be taken care of.



**My book**

*Martin Parsons*

Langdyke is home to nearly 400 different wildflowers, many of which are very beautiful and some are quite rare. I've been reading up on many which are new to me.

*Our treasured connections to Langdyke*



**The photo of my first Bee Orchid**  
*Anita Bruce*

The iconic Bee Orchid is one of the most exotic looking flowers in the British countryside. I spotted my first specimen in the grasslands above Swaddywell Quarry. I'd been told they were in flower and where to look, but had no joy, despite searching for several hours on several visits. I had almost given up, put my bag and camera down to scan the distance (I had imagined them to be much taller than they actually are!) and there, a couple of feet away, it was! I photographed and sat contemplating the rather tiny bee orchid for half an hour, then realised I was surrounded by them. They are much easier to spot now but I still get excited when I see one, all these years later.



**Nest box**  
*Richard Astle*

Setting up a nest-box scheme in Rice Wood was the first thing I did when I moved into Helpston in 1997. It was the start of my work in and love for John Clare Country and is a source of constant interest every year. Today I am quite impressed with my workmanship and that the box has lasted this long!



**My photographic apparatus**  
*Duncan Kirkwood*

Swaddywell has hidden treasures which often surprise me. Species not visible to the naked eye but which can be observed by use of this close-focus binocular, e.g., the recently discovered Water Stick Insect ... Europe's largest and likely most elusive water insect.

The full frame format mirrorless camera is coupled to 'telephoto' lens. It's a simple, manual focus, two element, 'telescope' lens, enabling up to life size magnification at distances of 3m to 5m from the pond edge - as used by professional wildlife photographers in the 1960s - but still capable of excellent results with modern cameras.



**Dog Lead**  
*David Cowcill*

Dylan was a country boy - born and raised on a farm in Ceredigion, with straw for his bed, buzzards for his wingmen, cattle and horses as companions. As a Flatcoat Retriever/Collie cross he did not know whether to herd sheep, find pheasants or chase a hare just to stretch all their legs. He was the key to at least two hours on the footpaths and byways of John Clare Country twice each weekend - from Peakirk to Tallington, Ufford and Upton, Etton, Woodcroft and Marholm and all points in-between, in all seasons and weathers, throughout the year.



**The tree**  
*Kayleigh Ellis-Bailey*

I have a nature reserve outside the front of my house. It's peaceful to wake up to!



**My shoes**  
*Kathryn Parsons*

These shoes have walked through all the Langdyke reserves I've visited... there will be Langdyke mud on the soles! They're my direct connection with our local countryside.



*Spoon Little Owl*, 2019

**Harriet Mead**

I take my inspiration from the natural world, my father was a well known ornithologist and my mother was very knowledgeable about plants so they nurtured a fascination in everything to do with nature. Both my sisters and I are creative and still love the natural world. The family home in Tring in Hertfordshire was crammed with books and stuff which didn't leave too much room for people but it had an unusually large garden for a suburban house and we spent hours looking in the ponds and making dens in the little orchard with chickens pecking around.

My slightly unusual childhood meant that it was commonplace to see all sorts of species of birds up close as dad was obsessed with bird ringing and our trips and rare holidays always revolved around birds, bird ringing and nature. It seemed inevitable that wildlife would inform my art. I use old tools and other ferrous items to make my sculptures. I try to make sure that each piece stays fairly recognisable within the work but at the same time I want the viewer to see the sculpture and recognise the creature immediately rather than see the tools then struggle to identify the animal. Little owls lend themselves very well to my style of sculpture with their piercing eyes and lovely feet.

When making my work I invariably start with the head as this gives me the proportions for the piece. With *Spoon Little Owl* I used ring spanners for the eyes and then spent a long time getting the right structure for the eye sockets and facial discs, for which I used various things including scissor handles and old washers. Many of my sculptures have lots of gaps between items so that you can see right through the work but for this piece I knew that I wanted it to be more solid to suit the subject. I used the reciprocal blades that come from combine harvesters to build the head and bulk out the body, and a trowel down the back. There are shears and other blades in its wings and bits of bow saw blades and circular saw blades help to imply feathers where required. The draining spoon worked well for the chest as I felt that the pattern of the holes was a little nod towards the plumage detail.

*I do think that one of the biggest parts of being a naturalist is noticing things and I think that is a very important part of making my sculptures.*



# Langdyke STORIES



**The Langdyke Stories project was produced by Art Pop-Up in collaboration with Langdyke Countryside Trust and funded by the Peterborough Communities Fund**

**#PeterboroughTogether**

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*Langdyke Stories* by Art Pop-Up for Langdyke  
Countryside Trust, celebrating the art engagement  
programme with the Peterborough Communities  
Fund for the Trust's 20th anniversary



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