



# Newsletter

## September 2020

### Edition One

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

### In this newsletter....

In this September issue you will find the following:

- Welcome
- The Fen Flag article
- The Farmland Museum and Denny Abbey article
- Fen Folk Fridays
- The Fens Calendar
- Celebrate the Fens day
- Sponsorship opportunities
- Volunteering opportunities

### “The Fens” 2021 Calendar

Thanks to everyone who got involved in “The Fens” calendar, by sending your photos. Sorry, we could not choose all of them, but we really appreciate the amount of time everyone has taken to join in. Our June page is extra special as it features several smaller photos to acknowledge Celebrate the fens day. Please get in touch to pre-order if you like to purchase one, it will be on sale from the end of September via our website. If you have a shop and would like to sell them for us, please let us know.

### An Introduction to Fascinating Fens: by Karen Merrison

Fascinating Fens believes in engaging communities to promote and explore the fens through heritage, creativity, nature, wellbeing and accessibility.

I started Fascinating Fens for the love of the fens. It began as a hobby but is more of a passion now. The stories of Muscovy and Eeli partly started it. They feature places and folklore in the fens, and I loved writing and illustrating them. They have now become part of the “Fascinating Fens Tails”, a collection of stories and poems for children about the fens with various fen animal characters. Fascinating Fens has continued to gain momentum with projects such as “Celebrate the Fens day”, “Fen 2021 calendar”, “Fen Folks Fridays”, colouring competitions/challenges, story reading events, and the giant community lockdown eel. I voluntarily complete these projects and enjoy doing them. Please continue to get involved and I love seeing your photos on social media.



## The Fen Flag by James Bowman

The obvious symbol of the Fens is the Fen Tiger. This designation derives from the sometimes violent opposition of the local population to the drainage schemes of the 16th and 17th centuries, and the term has subsequently been used for various clubs and associations. The proposed design features a heraldic tiger placed in a central field of yellow, representing agricultural prosperity. The blue outer fields represent the region's natural and manmade waterways.

## The Flag Campaign by James Bowman

It was the success of the Black Country Flag, registered with the Flag Institute as a regional flag in 2012, that inspired the idea of designing and promoting a flag for the Fens. The Fenland Flag is intended to represent an identity which, like that of the Black Country, transcends towns and counties. After a couple of false starts I began the campaign to gain recognition for the flag in September 2018, and since then the response has been very positive. There are now scores of Fenland flags and pennants flying in the region and hundreds of stickers affixed to various surfaces, mainly shop windows and car windscreens. Supporters of the campaign have helped spread the word about the flag, and local businesses have embraced it warmly. The next and, I hope, last part of the campaign will seek to obtain expressions of support from more administrative and ceremonial bodies and other major stakeholders across the Fens.



## Celebrate the Fens day 2020:

Thank you to everyone who joined or provided events in the very first #CelebrateTheFens day. It was a huge successful even though it had to turn to a virtual celebration.

There was a wide variety of activities including our themes of creativity, heritage, nature, wellbeing and accessibility from all parts of the fens: Cambs, Norfolk, Lincs and Suffolk.

**People/groups who got involved included:** our followers on social media, BBC Radio Cambridgeshire, Fen Speak (poetry), Fen edge trail (walks), Fens Biosphere, Hereward the wake project, Stretham Old Engine, Isle ave a Shanty, Penland Phezants/Phezants Tail, Kaitlin Ferguson/Market Place Creative people and places, Wisbech Museum, The Farmland Museum and Denny Abbey, Ely Museum, Benjamin Langley (writer: blog), Andrew Dunn (cyclist: blog), The Owl Whistler (blog), Fenland Coddwompler (videos), Lyddie Pinfold (nature/photography: blog) and Farmer Luke (video). People who planned to be involved but unfortunately had to cancel their events due to Covid included: Crowland Abbey, Babylon Arts, Elgoods Brewery and Cambs Open Studio/Isle of Ely Arts.

**The date for next year: 19<sup>th</sup> June 2021** (the whole weekend 18<sup>th</sup> -20<sup>th</sup>), get in touch if you want to be (part of it).



## The Farmland Museum and Denny Abbey: by Sarah Michael

The Farmland Museum and Denny Abbey, an open-air museum telling an 850 year story of farming, communities and life in the Cambridgeshire Fens, has now reopened thanks to support from The National Lottery's Heritage Emergency Fund. The emergency fund was put together to support the heritage sector as an immediate response to Covid-19. Its purpose is to ensure that community heritage assets, like the Farmland Museum, are protected through this unprecedented period.

The funding has helped the museum to put in place Covid-19 compliant safety and hygiene measures for all visitors, staff and volunteers. As a result, the museum will look a little different for now. Some indoor exhibits will remain closed and a one-way system is in place. Denny Abbey and the Nuns' Refectory, the Village Shop and Wheelwright's, all outdoor spaces and collection of farming machinery are now open to be enjoyed by everyone.

Entry is FREE to all visitors this season but visitors must book in advance to limit numbers and comply with the government's Covid-19 guidelines and NHS Test and Trace rules.

To see what's open and to book a visit, go to <https://www.dennyfarmlandmuseum.org.uk/content/about/book-your-visit>

Visitors can also download a series of informative guides in advance to accompany their visit. There's a guide to the outdoor machinery collection, an audio tour and guide to Denny Abbey  
<https://www.dennyfarmlandmuseum.org.uk/content/visiting-us/download-a-guide>

The museum is open every Thursday – Sunday until 1st November from 11am until 5pm, with last admission at 3:30pm.

## Volunteer with Fascinating Fens....

If you love the fens and like the type of thing fascinating fens is trying to achieve, why not volunteer with us to promote and explore the fens?

You can spend as much or as little time as you wish, helping with our projects.

Please get touch to find out more

## Sponsor Fascinating fens....

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

In return you will receive advertisements in our newsletter, website and social media.

Please get in touch for more details





**Fen Folks Fridays:** Do you love the fens? If so, join our free friendly monthly zoom "Fen Folks Fridays" to meet others who share your interest. Each meeting will include 1-2 speakers about topics relating to the fens. If you are new to zoom, please feel free to email me prior to the event as I'm happy to practice a little with you first online. It will also include updates of forthcoming events in the fens. Please book in advance: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/fen-folks-fridays-september-2020-tickets-121714241573>

Our September 25<sup>th</sup> 7.30pm event will include a talk from Paul Burrows (see photo above) who is a Flood & Coastal Risk Manager for the River Great Ouse catchment at the Environment Agency. Paul will share how the uniqueness of the Fens and the importance of flood management infrastructure has captured his heart and is challenging his brain. He'll provide an overview as to how the Environment Agency are working with other organisations to face the challenge of a changing climate in an area that is so very dependent upon the effective availability and management of water.

Karen from Fascinating fens will also give a brief overview during the meeting about the current fascinating fens projects, including opportunities for the community to get involved.

Friday October 23<sup>rd</sup>: Will include James Boyce talking about his book "Imperial mud", and a talk about the Shakespeare's Guildhall trust at Kings Lynn (tbc).

Friday November 20<sup>th</sup>: Will include a talk from Rachael Brown from Fens Biosphere, and Amanda Jenkins from the Lincolnshire wildlife trust.



## Upcoming events:

Most of our favourite events across the fens have unfortunately been cancelled or have converted into virtual ones. If you have events let us know. We would normally be looking forward to harvest festivals, ghost tours, Halloween, bonfire shows and Christmas fairs. **Soham pumpkin fair** is normally in September but it has a virtual show this year. Fascinating fens was proud to illustrate the colouring competition picture for the event.

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