

Collaborative poem 1: From New Salts Farm to Big Skies

Big skies rise-up from beyond our glorious Downs.
Untethered clouds and soothing winds,
Easing us gently across the New Salts Farm.
We are not disconnected from this landscape,
The stories that it tells
Of clumping purple clover, skeletal seed heads
Our elemental wanderings observed by curious sheep,
Sloping off as we draw near.

Who else had dreams of meandering streams?
A Saxon family nestled at the edge of the marshlands,
In the haze of some ten centuries ago.
Commissioners of 1341 tasked with holding back the sea?
What life is now hidden to the bustling town?
A wonderous mess of toad spawn, Blue Tailed Damsel Flies,
Cetti's Warblers and Grass Snakes,
Nestled in the scraps of hedgerows,
Clinging to ragged field edges.
The Bearded Tits allowed to fill the skies
Reclaiming what was theirs
Before the tower blocks and airport came
And will be theirs again.

What's this?
A wetland, chalk in its veins,
Waiting for the river to re-wiggle its course.

Re-establish

Re-wet

Re-wild

Re-nature

Re-instate

Re-welcome

All the vast community of life,
And neighbourly folk of every sort,
Deep breathing with the breeze in our hair.
But treading more lightly
On that which lives here.

Collaborative poem 2: A World of Nature in Numbers

Just beyond the A259 busying along between Worthing and Shoreham,
A world of nature in numbers awaits.

70 is the acreage that holds this unassuming wetland haven.
Where the trains glide past on the northern edge,
And further in the Leafhopper, newly arrived immigrant, is now settling.
700 is the species counted, including us,
Who celebrate the swoop and dip of birds above.
While teased by a slow worm lifting its curious head,
To the sound of our boots upon the boards.
Then slipping away as we pass by.

120 years is the time before our lives
When last the Blue-tailed Damsel Flies
Spread their soul-restoring wings
Among hedgerows so plentiful then.
And willed back today in Alistair's over-brimming words
Re-wilding our imaginations.

9 the rarest species found
Through recent baseline counting up
Of what is happily living here.

Now
PAUSE

The call goes out
- Red Kite -

Oh raptor, glide in true beguiling majesty
Your wings stretched a little wider,
Painting the blue and grey and white above,
With memories of the heritage, history, and happiness
Of your home.
100 years or so ago
The time of soft fruit, peaches, raspberries,

cont.

Purpling, plums ripening on the branch where we stand.
Even more than the tallest of reeds and rushes
Formation dancing to the whistling of an autumn breeze.
Even more we've yet to know.

10th century winds up back to the salterns
Left by those who came before,
And knew this treasure of land was more than a patch.
Oh so much more than a farm.
But in truth a nourishing wilderness
Where our chit, chat, chatter
Accompanies the swish of grass and blushing of Red Clover
All along our softly trodden path.

If we are 20,
Then 20,000 may have wandered here.
Swallowed up by the South Downs
Drinking down the coolest, bluest sky,
And warmed into life
By this furnace sun
Just 1.