

## LewesLight 2017

*Now in its third year, October's LewesLight festival has become an important fixture within the East Sussex town. For 2017, it combined spectacular displays and installations with education around public realm lighting, the environment and Lewes' proud industrial and commercial heritage, as one YLP member discovered*

*By James Duffin*

# INDUSTRIAL REVELATION

LewesLight 2017 took place over the weekend of the 13-15 October in the small East Sussex town of Lewes.

Since its inception in 2015 by lighting designer and ILP VP Architecture Graham Festenstein, the festival has offered visitors a new way of looking at the town, and a new way of looking at, and thinking about, light. The festival is organised in partnership with Sussex Downs College and is supported by Lewes District Council and Lewes Town Council.

### THE CONCEPT

For 2017, the festival took a more compact route around the town compared to the previous two years. This new route started at the first installation at the town hall in the west of Lewes before passing down Lewes High Street, over the River Ouse and along Cliffe High Street to the final installation at St Thomas à Becket Church.

This route of a little over 600m had the advantage over previous years of making the festival even more accessible.

Visitors of all ages, from small children through to the elderly, were able to enjoy the magical beauty the festival brought to Lewes. Each year has a unique concept and, for 2017, the theme was the commerce and industry in Lewes.

Designers worked with this theme to create unique installations drawing on Lewes' long and varied history, with such diverse inspiration for sites as the railways, local produce, quarries, cement works – and even a medieval harpsichord workshop!

### THE DESIGNERS

As in previous years, many of the designers involved in the festival had a local connection with Lewes and the surrounding area.

For example, Chris Beasley of lighting design consultancy integratedlight lives and runs his business not far from Lewes. His piece was a striking installation at Fitzroy House inspired by Lewes' literary figures.

Returning for 2017 was Ellie Coombes, co-director of Nulty+, who grew up in the town and installed a 'market garden' outside Harvey's Brewery.

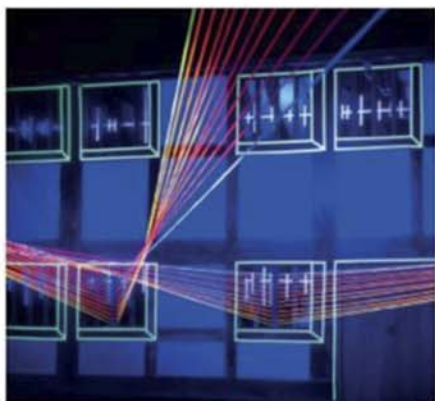
Local artists Guyan Porter and Maggie Lambert both contributed installations and the poetry of Lewes resident John Agard was interwoven throughout the festival programme.

Dan Burr, a former South Downs College student, presented his first LewesLight installation and, I am privileged to say, so did I.

Dan's installation was inspired by



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◀ Illumination combined with education: the LewesLight festival both captivated and inspired visitors to the East Sussex town, as this selection of images shows

Lewes' supposed former red-light district, while mine was focused on taking inspiration from Lewes' railway history.

From further afield, LewesLight veteran of 2015 and 2016 Karen Van Kreveld returned with the final installation on the route, a moving memorial to lepers and social outcasts. If you're interested, you can still find the full list of designers who exhibited and details of the festival team at <https://www.leweslight.uk/team>.

### TWENTY-SIX INSTALLATIONS

With 26 installations, LewesLight 2017 was the biggest yet for the festival. The sites were also more varied than in previous years, ranging from conventional architectural schemes through to UV lights and fluorescent paint; from light, smoke and sound through to interactive light games.

With such a wide range of installations, a wide range of skills were also required. As with previous years, light and projection were interwoven on many sites with spectacular results.

The biggest expansion for 2017 year was in the use of sound, and Jon Meacock took the role of sound designer for the festival.

A total of 11 sites required sound, and this was a large task for John and his small team. As with previous years, students and former students of the production arts course at Sussex Downs College provided

the backbone of the technical team, with lighting designers and artists helping and guiding them.

Visitors were given maps so they could navigate the festival on their own or there was the option of joining one of the guided tours running throughout each of the three evenings. There were even extended 'History Plus' tours for those wanting to learn even more.

### GENEROUS SUPPORT

The festival is produced on a limited budget and only exists thanks to a large amount of support and generosity from local businesses and the wider lighting industry.

For 2017, equipment was kindly provided by Architainment Lighting, LED Linear, Commercial Lighting, iGuzzini and Robe, to name but a few. The festival is also supported by the Society of Light and Lighting, the International Association of Lighting Designers and, of course, the ILP.

An array of local organisations lined up to give their support, including (and again this is just a snapshot) The Bluebell Line, Lewes Chamber of Commerce, Tesco, and the John Harvey Tavern.

So, how did it go down with locals and visitors? Well, in terms of numbers, LewesLight 2017 was certainly the best ever, surpassing all previous years with an estimated 10,000 visitors – in fact more than

ten times the numbers who visited the first festival in 2015.

It has become a beacon for Lewes, with excellent community participation in a high-quality temporary public art project.

Finally, the festival has become a springboard for ongoing events via a series of 'LewesLight Talks'.

For example, Colin Ball of BDP recently came to Lewes to give a fascinating insight into man's relationship with the night sky, essentially building on his recent 'How to be brilliant' lecture for the ILP (as reviewed in *Lighting Journal*, October 2017, vol 82, no 9).

This month (17 January) will also see James McCloskey, head of programme funding at the charity SolarAid, giving a talk on the excellent work it is doing in bringing clean, renewable light to African communities – and, coincidentally, see page 14 of this edition for more information on SolarAid and how it operates.

It may still be a number of months away but, with such a success in 2017, this year's LewesLight will be eagerly anticipated; in fact, the LewesLight team is already hard at work. So, watch this space for more information on it later in 2018. ■

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