



Photo: Tim Locke

BENTLEY WILDFOWL

September heralds one of my favourite events on the Sussex calendar, the Weald WoodFair (16 to 18 September; free shuttle buses from Lewes station) in the capacious grounds of Bentley Wildfowl and Motor Museum. All manner of things wood are demonstrated, celebrated and on sale – last year I bought a well-used but invaluable nameless tool which I use for hoiking out potatoes from the allotment, learnt how to split hazel twigs with a billhook (and ended up buying one of those too), watched a bodger doing his stuff on his marvellously Heath Robinson pole-lathe, browsed a stall labelled ‘traditional pimps, faggots and benders’ (not at all what it sounded) and spluttered in the evocatively smoky interiors of the reconstructed Saxon and Iron age dwellings in the woods at the far side of the site. While all this is going on, the mini-stately home, luscious grounds and wildfowl/antique car collection that form the hub of all this rather get overshadowed, but admission is included (or you can go at a less busy time until the end of October). The long, squat Palladian house is a series of ground-floor rooms reflecting the tastes of former owners Gerald and Mary Askew; their love of ornithology explodes in eye-popping fashion in the form of the bird paintings that cover virtually every square inch of the walls in the Chinese Room. In 1962, Gerald Askew began his remarkable collection of wildfowl, kept in naturalistic enclosures with informative display boards pointing out what’s what; there are 125 species here – or, even more impressively, there are only 22 they don’t have.

More details in Tim Locke’s Slow Sussex (£14.99 from Skylark, Tourist Info and Barbican House). [facebook.com/slowsussex](https://www.facebook.com/slowsussex)