



PRESS RELEASE

Leaping fox sculpture lands at Heligan as Mud Maid artists' vulpine vision is unveiled

A major new sculpture of a leaping fox has been unveiled at The Lost Gardens of Heligan to celebrate the estate's abundant wildlife.

Lowarnes – which is Cornish for “vixen” – is a 6m-tall sculpture made from vivid russet rhododendron wood grown at Heligan.

She has been created by the Cornish brother and sister artist team of Sue and Pete Hill alongside Hal Silvester. Sue and Pete were also behind the gardens' beloved Mud Maid, Giant's Head and Grey Lady sculptures. Hal, who worked on the Grey Lady with the Hills, was the lead designer of The Man Engine, an 11.5m-tall puppet of a Cornish miner.

The beautiful wood used to represent the fur of *Lowarnes* was harvested from a 150-year-old 'Cornish Red' rhododendron which fell during Storm Darragh in December 2024. Around 600 pieces were hand-split by Heligan staff, creating the wonderfully sinuous texture and curves used to represent the animal's fur.

Rhododendrons are one of the signature plants of Heligan and the estate is home to a National Collection of camellias and rhododendrons introduced before 1920.

The tree which was blown down and has donated its wood to *Lowarnes* pre-dated the First World War and the “lost gardeners” – workers on the estate who perished in that conflict, leaving the gardens to ruin.

This re-use of materials available at Heligan reflects the processes used in the creation of the Mud Maid and Giant's Head.

As the sculpture ages, the wood will fade to a lighter, more silvery tone which reflects what happens to vixens' fur after they have become mothers.

Lowarnes has been unveiled in its permanent home on the Georgian Ride at Heligan, a secluded spot surrounded by mature trees on the path to the Lost Valley at the lower reaches of the Heligan estate.

She is part of a sculpture trail that includes the Hills' other works, as well as installations celebrating the Heligan-inspired poetry of poet laureate Simon Armitage.

Armitage's *Dwell* collection was released earlier this year (2025) and is a companion piece to *Lowarnes*, with both works highlighting and celebrating the wildlife who make Heligan their home.

The poetry of *Dwell* has been released as a book as well as being immortalised in permanent installations around Heligan.

Also providing inspiration for *Lowarnes* was the photography of Heligan head of restoration Andy Wilson, whose exhibition of wildlife photography – 200 Acres – is currently on display in the gardens.

Sue said: "Simon Armitage's brilliant poem 'Den' speaks so powerfully of the wild, feral nature of foxes. We played with various ideas to express this, but in the end Andy Wilson's stunning photograph of a pouncing fox in mid-leap at Gillysame on the Heligan estate became our core inspiration. *Lowarnes* has her gaze set on you as her prey!"

Laura Smit-Chesterfield, director of visitor experience and legacy at The Lost Gardens of Heligan, said: "We are proud to be unveiling *Lowarnes* at Heligan. She is a glorious celebration of Heligan's wildlife and testament to the imagination, artistry and skill of Sue, Pete and Hal. This piece is a statement of intent for Heligan: the ambition of the work is clear and she is emblematic of our excitement for the future.

"From the inspiration to the materials, *Lowarnes* is quintessentially Heligan and a fitting addition to the existing artworks in our gardens. We are sure she will become as beloved and recognisable as the Mud Maid and will cement herself as a Heligan icon."

Sue Hill is a visual artist, performer, curator and theatre-maker. She was a key figure in influential Cornish theatre companies Wildworks and Kneehigh and has worked in a number of artistic leadership roles at the Eden Project

Pete Hill is a visual artist, maker, rower, rigger and glaciologist and was also a key figure in Kneehigh. He and Sue have created and worked on multiple artworks both in the UK and around the world.

Hal Silvester is a designer and maker predominantly for the 3D Arts and theatre. He was Head of Masks and Puppets for Disney's The Lion King theatre production in London and lead designer of The Man Engine, commissioned by the Cornwall Mining World Heritage Site (CMWHS) to increase awareness and appreciation of Cornwall's distinctive mining heritage.

ENDS

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Notes to Editors

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About The Lost Gardens of Heligan

- The Lost Gardens of Heligan were rediscovered from the brambles of time by Tim Smit and John Willis, who were the catalysts for a 30-year project that continues to this day. Heligan remains one of the most loved and romantic gardens in the UK, appreciated as much for its beauty and mystery as for the groundbreaking restoration project.
- Over 200 acres are now a paradise for the explorer, wildlife, plant lover and garden romantic. Victorian Productive Gardens and Pleasure Grounds beckon, along winding paths laid out over two centuries ago. The Jungle takes you on a sub-tropical journey through bamboo tunnels and under majestic tree ferns, giant rhubarb, and bananas whilst the estate reveals a lost world of traditional and rare breeds, wildlife and ancient woodlands.
- Heligan is a garden for all seasons, so whether you plan to visit in the hazy buzz of mid-summer, or the tranquillity of winter, you are guaranteed a unique experience.
- The Lost Gardens of Heligan is a member of The Great Gardens of Cornwall, a group of the finest Cornwall gardens. Open 364 days a year, pre-booking is available at Heligan.com