



Friends of

Thetford Forest Park

The Secretary, F.O.T.F.P., 2 Peacock Chase, Wymondham, Norfolk NR18 0XL - 01953 601105

Opening words from the editor

Yet another 3 months have passed by and I find myself talking to you again. I hope you will find at least something in this newsletter of interest – It has been a very eventful 3 months for those of us on the committee, but putting it into writing does not always convey the same feeling!

However before we get into the ‘news’, an apology is due to all of those of you that thought you had renewed but never received your new membership card. Due to an administrative problem we did not receive all the payment details from all the places that payment could be made, but this did not become apparent until our last meeting when it was noticed that we had suffered a severe drop in renewals. On investigation we discovered the problem and had no choice but to send out letters to all those ‘missing’ from the database. We are glad to report that most people responded in one way or another, and we now have a much increased membership base.

Since our last newsletter we have made progress with the work at Mildenhall, increased our Corporate Membership base after extensive work on the literature, assisted in the setting up and running of the Young Ranger group (so successful that we actually have 2 separate classes now), paid a visit to STANTA, set up more conservation group projects, and made publicity visits to the High Lodge concerts and local Agricultural Shows. This represents a large commitment of spare time for all the committee members, but we all feel it is worth the effort and gets ‘The Friends’ name known.

Worthy of mention is the fact that later in the year our funds will be increased by an, as yet unknown, sum that The Forestry Commission have bequeathed to us as a result of a reward made to them for an archaeological find on their land locally. We are obviously very grateful to them for this donation, which will be put to good use on one of our projects.

Finally could I remind you that although not compulsory, attendance at our AGM is welcome, so see the details later on in this issue!

STANTA Visit 15th June

After last years cancelled visit, we finally made it into the Battle Area for an all day visit. The weather was very kind to us, and we all had a very interesting day made all the more so by a couple of informative talks on the Forestry and bird life aspects arranged for us by the M.o.D. We also learned that the opportunity for visits into the area may be withdrawn next year due to staff retirements, however if there is enough interest and we get in early enough we may get one final visit in next May.

Should anyone be interested could they let the secretary know a.s.a.p. as these visits have to be booked months in advance!

For those of you that were not able to make it on the day, and anyone else interested there follows a short piece written by Anne Mason on the history of the Battle area:

A visit to the area in the 18th or 19th Century would have revealed a very different landscape to that of today – Not only were there six small villages and four rabbit warrens, but two large estates with their halls, stables, farms and gardens existed at Buckenham Tofts and West Tofts.

White's Norfolk Directory of 1845 records that Buckenham Tofts had only 77 inhabitants, a ruined church, numerous small houses and of course the hall itself. West Tofts is described as a small hamlet, a farmhouse and the hall with its extensive parklands.

By the 1900's at a time of agricultural depression and loss of farming income, several of the larger Breckland estates were amalgamated including Buckenham Tofts with Diddington and West Tofts with Lynford. With the creation of the Battle Area during the Second World War, both the extensive halls were demolished having been unoccupied for some time.

Although much of the brickwork has long since gone, it is still possible to make out some areas of garden and park, with the avenues of trees and the lakes still in place. The lack of modern day farming throughout the whole area has given the whole landscape a different appearance to the rest of Breckland and gives a real insight into the way it used to look.

Foresters Log Summer 2002

Summer is really here and we have just finished a very successful weekend of concerts. Both Jools Holland and Jarvis Cocker gave us a fantastic evening of music and entertainment. Those of you who attended the concerts will have seen the Friends stand 'manned' by some of our hard working members. The aim of this is to spread the word about the 'Friends' and hopefully get new recruits. The stand is going round to quite a few shows this year. We always need more helpers for this, please get in touch if you are interested in joining in.

Also, we have just opened the restaurant part of the new building. I know that everything is not completed yet and that the landscaping is in need of repair and that the cycle hire building and the new toilets are not finished yet, but bare with us a bit longer, please. Come and see how it is progressing, come and see the beautiful new restaurant, come and enjoy the forest!

Summer events are going well and we have three drama productions coming up shortly. We are expecting another evening of fun and laughter from Illyria when they return, this year with 'As You Like It', the talented children of the Norfolk Youth Music Theatre will be performing 'Oliver' and, as part of our Mediaeval weekend, the story of 'Robin Hood' will be performed by Ophaboom in Commedia dell'arte style complete with masks.

And one more event.....The Friends are organising a St George's Day event for April 2003 and could do with a few more people to help with the planning. Any one interested in helping can contact me, Frances, at Forest Enterprise

That's all for now Enjoy the Summer!
Frances

Forest Tour October 2nd

Once again this year we are organising a tour of the forest taking in some of the 'working' aspects that are not normally accessible to the public. By necessity this tour has to be on a weekday but in order to plan ahead we need to know how many of our members would like to come. The intended timetable for the programme is 0900 start at Santon Downham, finishing at 1430 hrs after lunch at High Lodge.

We need to be able to sort out the transport arrangements, so the sooner we know numbers the better. As it is not practical to take a large coach into the actual forest, numbers will be limited to those carried by 1 or 2 mini-buses only and will be on a first come first served basis. It is hoped that we can get transport at a nominal cost, so there should be no actual charge for this visit.

Those interested in joining us on this trip should contact the Secretary as soon as possible so that we can arrange for the transport etc.

Conservation Group

The programme for the coming season has been planned as follows:

Sunday 14 th July	Repairing damaged bat-boxes at Santon Downham training room (This is in the old schoolroom just over the road from the Santon Forestry Office car park).
Sunday 15 th September	Scrub clearance and grass cutting at St. Helens Well Santon Street.
Sunday 13 th October	Mildenhall Warren Lodge scrub cutting and clearing after the tree harvesting operations.
Sunday 8 th December	Scrub clearance at Hills and Holes, Hockham.

As you can see the locations are spread all over the Forest area, we do not limit the activities to High Lodge so why not come along and see parts of the Forest you might not normally get to see and lend a hand. We start at 9 o'clock and finish around 1 o'clock, but no one is forced to stay for the whole time, even just an hour would help! Further details on meeting locations and transport can be obtained nearer the dates from the Secretary.

Corporate Membership News

We are pleased to be able to tell you that we now have 4 corporate members of the group and would record our grateful thanks for their association with the Friends group.

- ✓ Fibrothet, Two Mile Bottom. (renewed for second year)
- ✓ Urban Forestry BSE, Bury S. Edmunds.
- ✓ Pearsons, Thetford.
- ✓ Jenners Printers, ????

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2002 Annual General Meeting – High Lodge Building ,Thursday October 17th

This years meeting will follow the same format as 2001 with a talk afterwards by Joe Watts of Forest Enterprise who has responsibility for the new area at Thames Chase. We will again be providing a buffet meal, so would be grateful if those interested in coming along would ***complete the reverse of this form and return it to the Secretary*** so that we can cater for the correct number of people.

High Lodge Phase II

If you have been to High Lodge over the last few months you would have come across diggers, builders and some disruption to the site but it has all been worth it. It is nearly there, the restaurant is now open, the toilets are almost complete and the builders are racing to get Paul Hills Bike Art side open, as well as much outside landscaping that they can do at this time of the year. So please be patient a little bit longer but we are going to end up with a fabulous resource for all of the visitors. If you go into the new restaurant and look up into the roof it has that cathedral feel about it and is just stunning. It will now be able to seat 100 people and will be available for evening functions, weddings, corporate and much much, more. High Lodge is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year and what a way to celebrate with the launch of the new extension.

The success of High Lodge has led to other Forestry Commission districts to visit Thetford to see what they are doing and the amount of energy that the recreation team put into developing and recognising all the opportunities. This energy has led to persuading four other districts to put on the Jools Holland and Pulp tour this year which proved to be very successful. The whole of the recreation team including all the staff at High Lodge Forest Centre deserve a special mention for the hard work and commitment that they put into the Thetford Concerts. We also hope that the Friends corporate members Fibrothet and Urban Forestry enjoyed their hospitality picnic baskets and an evening of good music and entertainment.

Young Rangers Club

The Rangers Club goes from strength to strength with last month's subject 'Looking at Wildflowers'. The group met at Brandon Industrial Estate to visit one of the smallest local conservation areas, and hunted for wildflowers. We found many species such as Viper's Bugloss, White Campion, Mignonette and Field Southernwood. For July we are looking at Butterflies, Dragonflies and Moth's where we will be trying to find them and planting plants for food for them. Why not come along on the 27th July to find out more! As these sessions are frequently over subscribed, please give us a call before to let us know on 01842 810271.

Summer

What delights are dreamed up by the arch magician of the gardens, fields & forests. Bursts of flowers like colours from a conjuror's wand filling the eyes with wonders and lush, lush green, drinking in the rain and soaking up the sun and lazily stretching leafward and grassward into a sky filled with the sweet fluting sons of the woodlark by day and the churr of the nightjar as dusk breathes gently over bracken and heath.

Bees, drowsy at first, now busy on their nectar flights. The Gatekeeper butterfly trembles in its fragile flight and the hummingbird hawk moth visits a very special garden. Dragonflies and damselflies hover and zig zag in sudden electric flashes of movement over ponds and lakes where moorhen have watched tadpoles wriggle into freedom and toadlife, whilst fish swim lost in patterns of silent, sun-dappled dreams.

Lest we forget, poppies stand tall where others have fallen and the constantly flowering gorse reminds us that "kissing's out of season when the gorse is out of bloom"!

Treebeard nearly bursts his bark as he surveys his beloved and trusty forest come to growth. And now a time for Nature's song of joy, full throated sung, under the comforting warmth of summer's outstretched hands.

Anon

Please detach the slip at the dotted line

Please return to The Secretary, 2 Peacock Chase, Wymondham NR18 0XL

Name.....Telephone Contact No.....

Please reserve me.....places at the 2002 AGM of the Friends.

My membership Number is.....