



**AUGUST 2003
NEWSLETTER 28**

Friends of

Thetford Forest Park

WITH GRATEFUL THANKS TO ALL OF OUR CORPORATE MEMBERS:

**FIBROTHETFORD
PEARSONS THETFORD**

**JENNER PRINT
THETFORD GARDEN CENTRE**

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

Opening words from the editor

With so much to fit in this issue, just a few brief words to say that we were pleased to see so many of you at the St. Georges Day event and at the open day at Mildenhall Warren Lodge. It is gratifying to talk to you and put faces to names on our members' list! Further in you will find details of this years AGM and to enable us to arrange the catering it is essential that you tell us how many of you are attending, whether by phone, mail or e-mail we don't mind.

A new benefit for our members

With the kind agreement of Forest Enterprise (or more correctly now Forestry Commission), we are able to offer all members 10% discount off the price of many events with effect from the publication of the new What's On Guide for the Autumn/Winter season. Unfortunately due to contractual restraints a few of the events have to be excluded from this offer, but the vast majority are discountable. Simply quote your current membership number when booking and once this has been verified the discount will be applied. We hope to continue this offer on an ongoing basis, which will be of real benefit to both occasional and regular participants in the events.

Mildenhall Warren Lodge Final Report

On Thursday 22nd May 2003, the 'official opening' celebrated the restoration of Mildenhall Warren Lodge and the creation of a circular walk, with interpretation, across the former warren. Media coverage surpassed expectations with articles in the Eastern Daily Press, Bury Free Press and the East Anglian Daily Times; interviews on Radio Norfolk and Radio Suffolk and a feature on BBC Television's 'Look East'.

Fund-raising for this project had begun in the autumn of 1999 and resulted in £5 000 from Forest Heath District Council; £21 700 from English Heritage and £22 500 from The Heritage Lottery Fund. The Forestry Commission, the landowner, made significant 'in-kind' contributions, including the creation of a car park, way-marking the new walk and giving expert advice at all stages of the project.

Members of Friends of Thetford Forest Park undertook conservation work around the lodge itself and along the walk and helped with deciding the route the walk should take. As the project progressed, special walks were held to show the public the developments. Mildenhall Museum has created a

display of artifacts from the site together with copies of original documents relating to the warren and has linked this display to the history of warrening in Breckland.

Following the tendering processes and the awarding of contracts, restoration work began in September 2003 under the guidance of Philip Orchard, architect, The Whitworth Co-Partnership, Bury St Edmunds. His knowledge of medieval building construction, attention to detail and quiet efficiency cannot be faulted. The builders, Butlers of Sawston, carried out the work with superb craftsmanship and expertise. Their skill, care and consistently high standard of work has delighted and impressed everyone.

During the restoration, monitoring and recording were carried out by Suffolk Archaeology Unit, Edward Martin providing valuable advice at the site meetings, and Planning Supervision was by P F B Construction Management Services Ltd of Norwich.

Suffolk Archaeological Unit were on site again to investigate the 'pile of rubble' adjacent to the east elevation of the lodge. Underneath the mound was the clunch wall of the nineteenth-century lean-to, the brick floor and traces of its use as a washhouse. Also discovered during the restoration were two wells and a possible cesspit or soakaway and these were made safe by Butlers as part of the additional work necessitated by the need to preserve the exposed section of walling.

The interpretation boards are based on the idea of 'The Warrener's World' and use the names of warreners known from documentary research. They are mounted on specially constructed mounds to complement the warren banks still remaining in the landscape. A leaflet has been produced by Forest Heath District Council describing the wildlife and the landscape features on the walk and is available at all visitor information outlets. Forest Heath District Council is including the lodge in the 'Discover Mildenhall' day it runs for schools and the walk is also being promoted in its 'Healthy Walks' leaflet.

The first public 'Open Day' on 26th May, a Bank Holiday, resulted in over seventy visitors, including two people who knew the lodge when it was still occupied as a home. Friends' has decided to hold an annual open day on this day in conjunction with the Suffolk Wildlife Trust whose Rex Grahame Orchid Reserve, on another part of the warren, also has its open day then.

Perhaps the project is best summarised in letters received after the official opening. Alan Johnson, English Heritage's Government Historic Buildings Advisory Architect, wrote of 'this very impressive partnership endeavour' and David Burnip, Chief Executive of Forest Heath District Council, described it as 'a shining example of partnership working.'

Anne Mason Chairperson, Friends of Thetford Forest Park.

A Day in The Life Of...

Julie Ward High Lodge Visitor Centre Manager

I think I will take a typical sunny Sunday or sunny school holiday day as an example:

Try to get at my emails, post and other paperwork that seems to multiply throughout the day - some requests for information or raffle prizes, enquiries and bookings for corporate events and parties. Then it's onto the finance side of things and sort out the tills with floats and check the rotas.

9 am and we are open. The car park hut attendant is in place, the shop and restaurant are preparing for the ensuing hoards that will descend upon us.

My role throughout the day is to ensure the smooth running and public enjoyment and safety of all of our visitors. Most of the time enjoyable and fun as the people at High Lodge actually want to be here to enjoy themselves (I previously worked as a Manager at Tesco and, believe me, on a sunny Sunday afternoon, they didn't!) but on the odd occasion problems arise - toilets, electrics, parking, staffing

and of course accidents. Although First Aiders are always on site (including Go Ape staff) there is always the accident which surprises you - like the man at Easter who picked up an Adder to show his son and then announced his allergy to wasp stings as we watched his hand balloon.

I am always in contact with the Rangers who are very busy on days like this, co-ordinating with High Lodge over lost children, lost mums and dads, unauthorised barbecues and the odd fire (if you remember, we had a spate of them during the early dry spell in March/April).

As with all jobs, most of the time I thoroughly enjoy it, I am a people person and love working with the public, but there are those days when.....

2003 Annual General Meeting

This years AGM will take place at High Lodge Visitor Centre on Thursday 16th October at 1900 Hrs starting with a buffet meal and includes a presentation by Mr. Jim Lyon our Forest District Manager. Since Jims' arrival in the post, Thetford Forest and the rest of his domain (East Anglia and beyond) has seen great change both in terms of landscape and use, so it will be good to have it summarised by someone at the heart of the changes. To enable us to cater for everyone we would ask that you let us know as soon as possible if you intend coming along, thank you.

Conservation Group

The next set of dates for the group are as follows.

- >**August 17th 1000-1300 Hills and Holes, Hockham** – An overview of the work so far and a walk around the site; This date is a 'looking' rather than a 'doing' day so why not come along?
- >**September 7th 0900-1300 High Lodge Thetford** – Bat box check/repair/replacement work
- >**October 26th 0900 -1300 Hills and Holes, Hockham** – work on and around the pingo's
- >**November 30th 0900-1300 High Lodge Thetford** – Bat box check/repair/replacement work

Further details can be obtained from the Secretary, so if you have not been on one of these events before please ring for the location of our meeting points.

Young Rangers Club

Although currently we are only part way through this years 'classes' , we are already planning for next year in conjunction with the Recreation Rangers and we are intending to incorporate other facets of the forest experience into next years schedule as well as retaining some of those on this years calendar. More details will follow once it has been organised. Those of you whose children attend will know how popular the days are and invariably we run over time, simply because there are so many questions to answer!

An Invitation to the 2003 Friends 'Day out'

This year, the plans are to leave Santon Downham at **0830 on Saturday 27th September** on a coach visiting the Sutton Hoo site during the morning, and for lunch, followed by a visit to the Sandlings part of the forest (near Ipswich) where we will also meet with their 'Friends' group, and finally returning to Santon for around 1900 Hrs. The anticipated cost will be around £15.00 per person, **BUT** we do need to know very soon the size of coach we need to hire for the day.

We would ask that you complete the slip overleaf and **return to the Secretary by the 16th August** to enable the necessary plans to be put into place. Please do not send any money yet until we have some idea of the numbers involved. To enable Sutton Hoo to cater for us , we need to know if you are going to be using their restaurant facilities (not included in cost) or taking your own food.

**PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN THE SLIP OVERLEAF AS SOON AS YOU CAN TO:
THE SECRETAREY, F.O.T.F.P
2 PEACOCK CHASE, WYMONDHAM, NORFOLK, NR18 0XL**

.....

Celebrate St George – A review of the event by Michael Hume

It is pleasing to report the success of this event, which was favoured with dry if cloudy weather. This encouraged an estimated attendance of some 1200 people which included numerous families for whom the day had been designed.

The event was opened by Carol Bundock from BBC Look East who played the damsel in distress, the perfect foil to the stars of the day, the dragon and an exuberant St George.

As a result £1020.02 was raised. This sum has been set aside to purchase new or adapt existing play equipment to make it accessible to young people who labour with a 'physical challenge' in their lives. A small sub group has been formed consisting of F E staff and members of the 'Friends' to investigate the way forward, and if anyone reading this report has any knowledge or experience they could impart please contact me on Telephone 01953 457520 or E mail to mandsu@supanet.com Once we have firm plans that can be costed we will be approaching various authorities seeking additional funding.

My thanks to the 'Friends' and the staff of Forest Enterprise for all their hard work.

High Lodge Resource Building – An update by Anne Embry of the Forestry Commission

The completion of Phase II of the High Lodge Forest Centre means that our restaurant has almost doubled in size, and we have gained the lovely new Bike Art retail wing. Unfortunately, during the construction we lost our old port-a-cabin classroom, which fell apart whilst trying to move it. Funding was sought to replace it immediately, and we are now pleased to announce that our new building is due to be completed by the end of August.

Built along the same lines as High Lodge itself, a green oak-framed construction similar to an old Suffolk barn, the new building is sited away from the Forest Centre among the lime trees at the far end of the field. Funding has been obtained from Suffolk County Council, Waste Recycling Environmental (WREN), and as part of Breckland's Objective 2 bid. Some of the building's green oak has come from Thetford Forest Park, and the pine for the flooring will also be from our own Forest.

Use of the building is planned to be exciting and varied. Of course, it will form the core of our extensive Ranger-led education programme – over 10,000 school children visit High Lodge every year. However, we are hoping to offer the new comprehensive IT facilities to post 16 learners, adult education providers from Norfolk and Suffolk, and a wide variety of life-long learning classes.

The resource building is also a useful platform for us to launch more intensely into the world of corporate events. With its own toilets, shower and small kitchen, the up to date conference and IT equipment make the building an unusual and unique venue for business meetings. Should groups wish to combine their business with a Go Ape trek, cycle ride or a three-course lunch, then they are all set for a corporate day with a difference! We are hoping that the building, once it is completed, will hold up to 30 people in a conference style set up, but unfortunately this could exclude us from offering larger groups the High Lodge experience. To alleviate this, an extension to the building is already being looked at, and we are pleased to announce that the 'Friends of Thetford Forest' have offered their help in this project.

The 'Friends' and Forest Enterprise will be working together on the funding for the extension, and we are currently investigating possible funding sources.

YOUR NAME.....MEMBERSHIP NUMBER.....

YOUR ADDRESS.....POSTCODE.....
TELEPHONE CONTACT NUMBER.....

NUMBER OF COACH PLACES REQD.....(RESTAURANT) OR (PACKED LUNCH) ?
please delete as applicable