



NOVEMBER 2003
NEWSLETTER 29

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

Those of you who attended the AGM will already be aware that your committee was re elected on the night, and that no other nominee's were put up for consideration. This does not mean that if anyone who was too shy, or could not attend on the night has lost the chance to help us in our aims by joining us on the committee – just let one of us know and we will get something organised.

For your information the committee is as follows:

Anne Mason	Chair
Sheila Hume	Treasurer and Membership matters
Dave Goodrum	Secretary and Newsletter Editor
John Shew	
John Carr	
Michael Hume	
Sally Goodrum	
Jo Horstead	
Basil Edwards	
Annie Swann	

The AGM was well attended and closed with a highly entertaining and informative talk given by the Forest District Manager Mr. Jim Lyon, who outlined his many and varied responsibilities for the vast area he has to cover (much more than just Thetford !)

Many thanks are also due to the staff at High Lodge restaurant who kept us fed and watered in style on the night. Some of them had been there all day and stayed on until we had finished so we are really grateful for their help.

All that remains for me to do is wish you all a pleasant end to the year, and hope for an early Spring!
The Editor

MILDENHALL WARREN LODGE MEDIA COVERAGE

Although we covered the official opening of the site in the last newsletter, what we did not know at that time was the very extensive media coverage the event generated – We featured in 7 newspapers, 2 radio programmes and on BBC TV's programme 'Look East'. All these items brought the Friends name to a wider audience and can only serve to help us in the future. We are also aware that the project is being used in some circles as an example of how co-operation between various agencies can work towards a better result for any project.

A BIT ABOUT BATS

Ten species of bats are known to occur in Thetford Forest. Some are known from listening in to their sonar calls and others from being observed in bat boxes, hibernacula and buildings.

The bat box programme was started in 1975 by Bob Stebbings and the Norfolk and Suffolk Bat Groups. The Forest currently has 378 bat boxes in groups of 18 in addition to the experimental boxes near High Lodge.

Species regularly recorded on the bat box checking days are Pipistrelle, Brown long-eared, Leisler's and Noctule, with the first two being by far the most common. Serotine and Natterer's have been recorded on rare occasions.

The Friends have spent considerable time and effort over the last two years both making and repairing the bat boxes in Thetford Forest and, as a result, most sets of boxes are largely complete and bat friendly. A recent innovation has been the addition of wire mesh on the bottom of the boxes to reduce the high levels of damage caused by squirrels and woodpeckers. The survey visits carried out during October 2003 found that only one of the boxes with the mesh had been 'broken in' to and this one was where a woodpecker had drilled a hole in the side, avoiding the mesh. There was quite a bit of evidence that attacks around the entrance of the boxes had been attempted but so far the wire mesh appears to have deterred them.

For interest the two new sets of boxes put up at High Lodge and at Mayday were well occupied in October, with one box at Mayday having 10 Long-eared bats in it.

A number of larger 'woodcrete' boxes, made from a mixture of sawdust, cement, resin etc, have been obtained by Norfolk Bat Group and it is planned to erect these at chosen locations during this winter.

Other bat sites in the Forest include the Santon Downham offices where a large maternity roost of Pipistrelle occurs in both the Forest Enterprise and the Forestry Commission buildings behind the wooden wall cladding.

Known hibernation sites included various wells and icehouses in addition to the purpose built hibernaculum at High Lodge. The latter regularly hold up to four species of bats in the winter with Natterer's, Daubenton's, Brown long-eared and the nationally rare Barbastelle. In the winter of 2001/2 a maximum of 6 Barbastelle were recorded hibernating here making this an important site for this species.

The success of High Lodge, both the hibernaculum and the Visitor's Centre, has resulted in plans being put together by Norfolk Bat Group and the Forestry Commission to build a new and larger hibernaculum. The site chosen is near the River Ouse. During the summer months many bats can be seen hunting insects in the river corridor and it is also an area that is relatively undisturbed in winter. It is hoped the Friends work party group will assist in clearing some of the scrub to provide a clear fly-way for the bats to find the entrance and also, later on, to assist with fitting out the interior of the hibernaculum with various artificial spots for the bats to roost in. The cost of the hibernaculum will be around £30000 and Anne Embry (Forestry Commission) is leading the search for funding. If successful construction of the site is due to commence in February 2003 to have the hibernaculum available for residence by bats later in the year, and the Friends will be involved from the start.

Thank you to all of you who have helped provide these threatened animals with a suitable home.

Nick Gibbons – Conservation Officer (and conservation group leader !!)

The latest 'Whats On' guide now lists all Friends conservation events, and of course contains details of the discounts available to our members on most other events listed.

AN IDEA FOR SEASONAL GIFT

If you are looking for something different as a present, why not buy someone a membership to The Friends – just send us their details and the fee, we will sort it out from there (We can either send the membership pack to you to hand over, or send it direct if you want). Don't also forget that your membership of the Friends also entitles you to a discount on purchases at the High Lodge Visitor Centre shop, and they currently have a range of seasonal gifts and ideas.

CONSERVATION GROUP DATES

The next set of dates for the conservation group have been arranged and are as follows:

SUNDAY 30/11/03 0900 HRS HIGH LODGE	BAT BOX WORK
SUNDAY 11/01/04 0900 HRS HIGH LODGE	BAT HIBERNACULUM WORK
SUNDAY 15/02/04 0900 HRS HOCKHAM	PINGO CLEARANCE WORK
SUNDAY 14/03/04	TO BE ADVISED, RING FOR DETAILS

As always, enthusiasm is more important than experience so come along and see what we achieve on these days.

OAK LODGE AND HIGH LODGE PHASE II OPENING

Monday October 27th saw the official opening of the new educational building on site at High Lodge and Phase II of High Lodge Visitor Centre itself. Oak Lodge was designed and built by Border Oak, who were also involved in the building of the Visitor Centre.

The ceremony was performed by Jane Edwards (Executive Director, Regional Consortium Cambridge East) and was attended by many local dignitaries and the media. Our own chairperson, Anne Mason, was also present together with other committee members. Those of you who attended the AGM will already know it is intended to extend Oak Lodge for the use of The Friends, and we are already investigating various funding opportunities available to us for that purpose.

FOTFP.ORG.UK

The website continues to be updated regularly, and seems to be accessed on quite a frequent basis, with a definite pattern emerging showing that most visits to the site are made from Thursdays to Sundays – this would point to people searching for things to do at a weekend and that the links we have in place from other sites and search engines are working correctly. Don't forget that you do not have to visit the site to e mail us – simply mail to info@fotfp.org.uk or membership@fotfp.org.uk these mailboxes are checked almost daily so you shouldn't have to wait for a reply for very long! We have no intention of discontinuing the paper newsletter, but if anyone would prefer to receive his or her copy by e mail (ms word format) to help save the postage, please let us know.

AN EXTRA MEMBERSHIP BENEFIT

We are pleased to announce that all Friends can get 10% off their Christmas Tree(s) when purchased at High Lodge on production of your membership card. We are grateful to FE for allowing us this concession and hope that many of you take up the offer.

YULE LOG

It has been a fantastic year for us in recreation. Just think back. Four marvellous concerts, one of the best theatre performances yet, the biggest 'Whats On' programme ever (now with discount for Friends), building of Oak Lodge, and we are about to bring you the grandest Christmas that the Forest has ever seen.

Come and see the lights on High Lodge and have fun and enjoy the excitement of Christmas in the Forest, 6th and 7th December 10am to 7pm. See flyer for more details.

A REQUEST FOR HELP !

Due to other commitments, the person that used to audit our accounts is not available for this year and we are looking for someone suitably qualified to carry out this task for us. We obviously would pay, but on a nominal basis rather than the figures we have been quoted so far by some accountancy firms. We have no alternative to have the books audited so please contact us if you can help.

CHRISTMAS IN THE FOREST December 6th and 7th 2003

At High Lodge, Thetford from 1000 – 1900 hrs

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Come and join us in a weekend of entertainment and fun for all the family.

The Forestry Commission and Weeting 21, working in partnership are providing a weekend at High Lodge where festive spirit can be guaranteed. Christmas lights set the scene – step inside the Wonderland.....

Plenty of parking for cars and coaches

Santa's Workshop

Christmas Market

Christmas Tree sales

Story Teller

Clown

Horse & Wagon rides

Children's area – roundabout, candyfloss, bouncy castle

Hot Chestnuts

For further information you can contact either

<i>Recreation Department Forest District Office Santon Downham Brandon Suffolk IP27 0TJ Tel: 01842 810271</i>	<i>or</i>	<i>Weeting 21 The Old School House Weeting Brandon Suffolk IP27 0QQ Tel: 01842 815928</i>
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Once again this year members of the Friends Committee will be in attendance on both days, so do come and say hello to us -and don't forget the chestnuts we will be roasting !

With the event being over 2 full days, we would welcome help from any members who can spare some time to assist with any of the activities, so if you would like to be part of the team please contact the Secretary.

