



*Friends of*

Thetford Forest Park

WITH THANKS TO ALL OF OUR CURRENT CORPORATE MEMBERS:  
**FIBROTHETFORD** **JENNER PRINT**  
**PEARSONS THETFORD** **THETFORD GARDEN CENTRE**  
**MAY GURNEY**

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Welcome to this, the first newsletter of 2005. It does not seem possible that another year has passed, but we have been so busy of the last 12 months and the time has just flown by. Included with this posting you have your renewal slip, which we would ask that you complete as soon as possible – being a relatively small group we really do depend on your subscriptions to enable us to continue with our work.

Whilst it is nice to reflect on our past successes such as the disabled bikes we purchased last year, we cannot afford to be complacent and so we are moving onto other projects for the coming year.

Our regular committee meetings involve ever closer involvement with the Forestry Commission to ensure that we are aware of all aspects of the ever changing forest, and at all stages of these changes we make our feelings known, it is after all why we formed the group in the first place 10 years ago and to celebrate this fact we invite you to attend

### Friends of Thetford Forest Park 10<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebration

Ceilidh on 21<sup>st</sup> May at High Lodge Forest Centre 7.30 – 11pm

Dance to the band 'Stowfolk'

Buffet included in price of ticket

Bar available during the evening, corkage charge if you bring your own

Single ticket with Special Friends discount (2 tickets per membership) £12.00

Single ticket for non members £16.00

Please see the What's On Guide (which will be sent to you soon) for ticket availability

#### More benefits of FOTFP membership for you this year

15% off the cost of a 12 month season ticket.  
10% off most Shop & Restaurant purchase .  
10% off Oak Lodge or other booked functions.

Free entry for 2 children to Santa's Workshop with advance booking options. Annual Friends Event.

Events programme and Forest Life magazine posted out twice a year .

10% off the cost of a 6 month season ticket.

10% off all events, except the concerts.

Quarterly newsletter.

**PLEASE SEE THE ENCLOSED APPLICATION FORM TO CONTINUE YOUR MEMBERSHIP**

## **10 Places in the East of England      Where am I now?**

1. I'm imagining what was once here. The Coastguard Cottages will tell me more.
2. I'm looking at a 16<sup>th</sup> century cottage, near a river, housing a display about a famous artist.
3. I can see for miles- 10 miles of vegetated shingle spit on the coast. Once a top-secret military test site.
4. I'm standing in the gardens of a lovely moated house built in 1482. What a magnificent Tudor gatehouse. I'm going to look at Mary, Queen of Scots needlework.
5. I'm resting next to a 16<sup>th</sup> century timber framed Tudor building. Nearby there is a walled garden that has dye plants. I think 'FOTFP' visited here last year!
6. Sitting by the ornamental lake in this 32-acre site, I graze up the lawns to the white house. 8 million trees planted in 6 months. Mr Bliss, take a bow.
7. The NT guide tells me this was once an Augustinian priory dating from the 12<sup>th</sup> century. I've seen the working watermill in the grounds.
8. I'm in a market town on the river Deben, on my way to the quayside to see the famous Tide Mill.
9. Can I do this? - A 93 mile walk ahead of me. If the Romans could do it then so can I. I'll keep thinking of dressed crab at the end of it.
10. I've seen the Hall used as a Forester Training School up to the 1950's and now I'm surrounded by a collection of trees. Cross the bridge over the stream to the Lakes.

The answers are on page 4, but no cheating yet please !!

Thanks to Jo Horstead

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### **EAST ANGLIA FOREST DISTRICT DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN – A brief report by Anne Mason**

On Wednesday 19th January, East Anglia Forest District launched its 'Regional Strategy for the Forestry Commission's Open Spaces and Woods in the East of England'. I was invited to attend the launch at Santon Downham Village Hall to represent Friends. Others there were from all the organizations that work with or have an interest in the Forest, including English Nature, The Brecks Countryside Project, English Heritage, District Councils, Go Ape and Bike Art.

Jim Lyon, Forest District Manager, explained how the strategy covers the next twenty years, with reviews every five and that it is based on six objectives: being an exemplar of sustainable land management; contributing to the quality of life for a wide range of people; enhancing the biodiversity, cultural value and landscape value of the forest; managing the forest to benefit the wider economy; developing strong partnership working and creating a positive work-based environment.

The six teams of Estates; Greenspace (Thames Chase); Access, Recreation and Tourism; Planning and Operations have the task of implementing the Strategy and a member of each team presented their plans.

Those present at the launch were asked to make comments and suggestions on the draft within a month, prior to the publishing of the final version.

It was wonderful to see that two of Friends' projects were featured in the presentations - Mildenhall Warren Lodge and the All-Ability Bikes Scheme.

If anyone would like more details of the Strategy, it is available in pdf format on [www.forestry.gov.uk/eadfstrategicplan](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/eadfstrategicplan)

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### **Mildenhall Warren Lodge Open Day**

If you have not already been to Mildenhall Warren Lodge or would like to make another visit and bring some friends, then Spring Bank Holiday Monday, 30th May is the date to remember!

The lodge will be open from 11am to 4pm, the only time in the year that you can go inside this medieval building. There will be a display about the history of the warren where the rabbits were farmed for their meat and fur, from the fourteenth through to the early twentieth century and also a walk across the warren area.

Friends restored the lodge with grants from English Heritage, The Heritage Lottery Fund and Forest Heath District Council and secured its removal from the 'Buildings at Risk' Register and you can combine this with a visit to the Rex Graham Reserve for rare plants nearby as it is also holding its annual Open Day on 30th May.

The warren lodge is situated in Mildenhall Woods to the east of Mildenhall. Grid Reference TL74067556. It is on the minor road, which links the A1065 and the A11 north of Barton Mills roundabout. From the A1065, the minor road is signed 'Household Waste Site; Elveden' and from the A11 it is signed as 'Mildenhall'.

Turn in to the signed car-parking area. It is then about ten minutes walk up the hill to the lodge

## **An article by Trevor Banham (Chief Wildlife Ranger at Santon Downham)**

April 14th this year is the 36th anniversary of my starting work for the Forestry Commission in what was then 'Thetford Chase'. I had to report to the Head Forester Mr Gordon Axten at 07.15 at the Didlington office, which stood at Highash very close to the site of The Desert Rats memorial. I was given a map and told to find my way around the Didlington beat. It struck me on that morning that, there I was a young man very excited about starting my very first day as a wildlife ranger and 'the powers that be' didn't have the faintest idea of what I should be doing. The real reason was that although a ranger team had been formed they were not ready for us to take up our duties. However this did provide me with a chance to expand my virtually non-existent knowledge of the Forestry Commission. For my first 6 weeks of employment I assisted the 2 beat gangers on a harvesting site.

Each ranger in the team was responsible for their own beat and the rabbit, hare and deer control on it although it was late 1970 before I was entrusted with a deer calibre rifle. At this time and up until mid 1970 the ranger team used their own transport. This for me meant a motorbike, as in the beginning I was not old enough to hold a car licence. It also meant carrying a shotgun, all that I was allowed to use then, in a slip across my shoulder while riding my motorbike. The security of firearms then was not the issue it is today but it did provide one or two interesting moments during my first winter in the snow, while travelling both in the forest and on the public roads. How I didn't completely destroy my shotgun when I came off, which happened several times, I will never really understand.

Working systems have changed so much during this period of time; it used to be enough to undertake visual deer population assessments that were then used as the basis for cull setting. Of course at the end of the day this really was not even an educated guess. These methods remained unchanged for many years but now we use technology in the shape of computer programmes to interpret the results we obtain from dung pellet counts and the use of a thermal camera. These two methods combined give us the most authoritative information that it is possible to obtain; this is then used to set the appropriate cull level for each species.

Another part of working as a wildlife ranger that has changed quite dramatically over the last few years is the way in which we treat the venison produced by our culling operations. We here in East Anglia Forest District are very lucky in that we have 2 new purpose built deer larders which enables our wildlife ranger staff to produce an excellent food product from something which really is a by-product of our crop and environment protection programme. As a result of the building of our larder here at Santon Downham myself and the building surveyor for the project have been nominated as the 'deer larder team for England'. This has meant that any forest district in England that wishes to either refurbish or renew a deer larder calls in the deer larder team when we will travel to the district to inspect and advise on work to be undertaken to bring it up to the standard required by current legislation. This is the reason for the establishment of our larder team in that it will ensure that every larder, in time, will comply with legislation and all of our wildlife ranger staff in England will be working to the same standard. It must be said that at this time our deer management techniques and standards are way ahead of anything out in the public sector. These results are directly attributable to a very robust and effective training programme and the commitment of our rangers out in the field. Certainly here in East Anglia we will continue to maintain these high standards of which we are all very proud. We will also continue to look to ways of improving on them, as no matter how good there can always be room for improvement.

Although I am now 'office bound' so to speak, the actual job of managing the team of which I was a part of for so long is just as much a challenge as it was while working as a ranger trying to outwit the deer in the forest. There have been so many changes over the years in the way in which we work and it will continue into the future I am sure. We must move along with these changes as they happen. We must endeavour by our actions to maintain a balance in the countryside of all the various habitats and wildlife living within them.

I look forward to every day at work now just as much as I ever did as no matter how long you spend working with nature there is always something new to be learnt if you are prepared to keep an open mind.

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### **Conservation Group – A review of the last 12 months.**

The group has met regularly throughout the year – in fact last year we met a total of 10 times and carried out work such as:

11 <sup>th</sup> January 2004	New bat hibernacula – clearance work
15 <sup>th</sup> February 2004	Hills and Holes – clearance work
14 <sup>th</sup> March 2004	Bat boxes – Brandon Country Park side
25 <sup>th</sup> April 2004	Mac's seat – pine clearance prior to replacement of seat with a view
23 <sup>rd</sup> May 2004	Mildenhall warren lodge – tidy up ready for open day
20 <sup>th</sup> June 2004	Mac's Seat – installation of bench and additional pine clearance to create the view
18 <sup>th</sup> July 2004	Cranwich Heath – spreading wild flower seeds
26 <sup>th</sup> September 2004	Brandon Country Park – scrub clearance
24 <sup>th</sup> October 2004	Rex Graham reserve – clearance of bank and tidy up
14 <sup>th</sup> November 2004	Santon Downham – 500 Alder whips planted

The Conservation Group have already met in 2005 – Jan 23<sup>rd</sup> ( Bat Box building)February 27<sup>th</sup> (Tree Planting) and on April 3<sup>rd</sup> we have some more clearance work to do in the Mayday Farm area. Why not come and join us, it's pretty informal and we always have a good time as well as getting the work done !!

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### **East of England Heathland Opportunity Mapping Project – By Michael Hume**

The purpose of this project was to find ways of adopting a more holistic approach to the care and indeed the expansion of heathlands in the eastern counties and move away from the somewhat fragmented approach based mainly on the conservation of habitat and species.

It's a year since this project came to the attention of the Friends (see FOTFP Newsletter 30, March 04). I attended the initial or 'scoping' meeting, however events precluded me from attending subsequent ones but information came through regularly.

From this it was clear that great progress was made; in fact the final report was published just over six months latter, though for technical reasons it was as long again before it arrived in every ones 'in tray'.

In his Foreword to the report, Richard Rafe, English Nature's area manager for Suffolk and chair of the project's steering group, ably summarizes this highly technical document. He highlights, amongst other things, "a habitat largely created by man and intertwined closely with our own history" and the importance of this and other such 'wild' places as having "an importance to people as well as wildlife". He poses the question of where new heathlands should be created or re-created: and stresses the "need for a strategic view" if those charged with bringing about change are to feel confident that they can achieve all that is required in this vast undertaking if not least in view of the paucity of the budget.

This 58 page report is both complex and demanding and possible not for the faint hearted; for those who are interested however just telephone me on 01953 457520, or E-mail: [mandsu@supanet.com](mailto:mandsu@supanet.com) and I will send you our copy together wit an addressed envelope (I'll leave you to pay the postage) for its return.

In my previous report on this project I concluded by asserting that the future of our heathland was "a little more assured"; that future is now 'a lot more assured'. Please read this report.

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### **Foresters Log**

Spring is upon us again and with it a great buzz of recreation activity within the forest. New events programme, new concert programme, new seasonal staff and, hopefully, fair weather to see it all through. Howard Sims and Darren Edwards joined Abi Melton on the Ranger team at the end of 2004 and three new faces will join them soon all ready for Easter and the summer season.

The new What's On will bring us a good mix of events from 'Babes in the Wood' for toddlers to painting and photography days, cycle rides, senior citizen lunches and a chance to experience the Dawn Chorus at Lynford Arboretum.

Illyria will be back again with Shakespeare at his most boisterous and farcical. The Comedy of Errors will be performed at High Lodge on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> July. One not to be missed.

As for concerts, these will be launched one at a time. But keep your eyes open, most of the tickets for Beautiful South on 10<sup>th</sup> June have already sold, and those for Ian Brown on 16<sup>th</sup> July are on sale from Friday 25<sup>th</sup> Feb. Two more concerts are yet to be announced. Information will be on the web site as each concert is launched.

As a result of clear-fell work there will be closures in the Swaffham area between March and May and in the Kings Forest f May to June. Work will also be going on in the area of FR2 opposite Lakenheath UFAF base and FR16 opposite the exit fr High Lodge.

Generally all areas will be open in the evenings and at weekends but for your own safety PLEASE OBSERVE SIGNS AT / TIMES.

If you have any comment on the closures or the work taking place in the forest, in the first instance please contact Frances Evershed on 01842 816036

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### **Quiz Answers!**

1.Dunwich Heath 2.Flatford (Bridge Cottage) 3.Orford Ness 4.Oxburgh Hall 5.Lavenham 6.Brandon Country Park  
7.Anglesey Abbey 8.Woodbridge 9.Peddars Way/ Norfolk Coastal Path 10.Lynford Hall/ Lakes