



Friends of

Thetford Forest Park

WITH THANKS TO ALL OF OUR CURRENT CORPORATE MEMBERS:

**FIBROTHETFORD
PEARSONS THETFORD
MAY GURNEY**

**JENNER PRINT
THETFORD GARDEN CENTRE
OMAR HOMES**

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The prologue

Another Summer season has passed us by and, although not the very of best weather, a very large number of visitors passed through High Lodge and the other parts of the Forest. Our membership has continued to grow in number, albeit somewhat slowed by the end of the summer, but it is still gratifying to see so many non-local people joining and supporting our work.

Once again this year we would ask that you consider going the Friends membership as a gift at Christmas – at only £7.50 it would still run to March 2007 – We know it's early to consider Christmas but it's not that far away, as you will see in this newsletter and the What's On guide plans are already afoot for various events. Of special interest is the item regarding the pre booking arrangements for visits to Santa to enable members of FOTFP to be ahead of the general public as promised in the benefits package.

This newsletter has been timed to enable the inclusion of a short report on the AGM and list details of your new committee. Unfortunately this year we have lost 2 valuable and long-standing members, however 2 new committee members were enrolled – for details see the AGM review.

Foresters Log

If you haven't yet experienced Santa's Christmas Wonderland at High Lodge it has to be on your list of essentials for this season. The Festive season will be packed with so much fun that you won't need to go elsewhere. We will have Christmas Trees and decorations, evening meals, family events and that **very special Santa** who makes even the parents wish that Christmas would last all year. (Friends special booking for Santa from 24th October)

If you really can't wait that long for fun and magic, come and join in the Hallowe'en Horrors. Let the children show their artistic talent in Pumpkin Carving on 25th, 26th and 27th October, and if you dare risk it, walk the treasure trail with them on 28th and 29th.

More details of these and other events on 01842 824612 or see the new What's On.

Frances – FC Santon Downham

2005 AGM

This years AGM was held on Thursday October 13th at High Lodge.

It was good to see so many of our members attending the AGM, not always regarded as the most interesting of events for any group, however once the formal reports from the Treasurer, Membership, Secretarial & Chair the election for the committee and associated posts for 2005 / 2006 were made.

The were no objections to the existing committee standing again, although B. Edwards and M. Hume elected not to offer themselves for re appointment. The remaining officers will sorely miss both.

The confirmed committee is as follows:

A. MASON	CHAIR
S. HUME	TREASURER AND MEMBERSHIP
D. GOODRUM	SECRETARY AND NEWSLETTER

J. HORSTEAD

J. SHEW

J. CARR

S. GOODRUM

ALL THE ABOVE ARE RE ELECTED TO THE COMMITTEE

A. SPIDY	NEWLY ELECTED
P. PARKER	NEWLY ELECTED

We welcome Patience and Alan to the committee and look forward to their input over the following year. As ever if you have any comments or views, please do not hesitate to contact us by any of the means listed at the top of the newsletter.

The meeting finished with a very informative talk from Colin Pendelton from Suffolk County Council Archaeology department who kindly stepped into the breach at the last minute when the planned speaker, Mike Taylor, was unable to make the meeting.

Colin explained to us that the forest has been recently recognized as a very rich source of archaeology due to the simple fact that in many the ground has not been ploughed, and so the evidence of the past is better preserved than in many other places. Although the final process of timber extraction, de stumping, is extremely destructive to the physical state of the ground, FC give prior notice and a rapid assessment team can assess the area before work can commence. Many of you will be aware of Grimes Graves, but did you know for instance that even the area around High Lodge itself is littered with examples of flint mining, and that the part of the cycle black run that runs downhill along the Brandon Road is in fact old flint pits ?

Colin then made the second members' draw, and the lucky winner is Mr. W. Daniels, who has been notified by post.

The date for next years AGM was set at Thursday October 12th at 1900 Hrs, to be held at the High Lodge Visitor Centre, but of course we will send out the agenda and an invitation much nearer the time.

Temporary Forest Closures

You may have already noticed the felling work around High Lodge, especially along the Forest Drive as you leave. We will be clear felling here as well as in Rishbeth Wood, around the Rifle Range & at Santon Downham (FR18&20) over the next 3 months.

Thinning will be taking place opposite the exit from High Lodge around FR 16.

Chipping will be evident in Kings and around clear fell areas.

Please take care at all times and enjoy your visits to the Forest safely.

MOVING FORWARD

'Friends' was formed a decade ago as a voluntary body to promote enjoyment, knowledge and understanding of Thetford Forest Park. It also set out to involve the local community and the general public in the future development of the Forest Park.

Quoting from the current membership leaflet, 'Friends...share common aims and work in close collaboration with Forest Enterprise' but we are an independent body aiming to serve the needs of our members and visitors to the Forest Park.

Are we meeting those aims? Your committee, yes your committee (you may not have elected them personally, but were you at the last AGM?) need to know what you think.

If you have read this far, please don't stop here.

'Friends' have completed a number of successful projects. One, the restoration of Mildenhall Warren Lodge has achieved national acclaim. Others have included twelve benches along the forests easy access trails and the purchase of seven bikes for use by less able children and adults.

- Do you have any ideas for future projects?
- Would you be prepared to help with a project (even if you don't want to be involved, please share your ideas)

In the past we have had a summer outing to a local place of interest such as the STANTA battle area, Rendlesham Forest and the Viking burial site at Sutton Hoo.

- Would you go on an annual day visit organised by the committee?
- How would you like to travel, on a coach or make your own way by car?
- Where would you be interested in visiting an area of East Anglia's Forests or Woods, a nature reserve owned by another organisation or have you any other ideas to share with us?

The committee has in the past arranged a number of talks about the forest but most have been poorly attended.

- Would you be interested in attending a talk on a 'forest theme' If not why not? Is it too far to travel or some other reason?
- If so what time of day would you attend, during the day, evening or weekend?
- Would a wider subject matter e.g. the history of Breckland/places to visit in the area be of interest?

Members of 'Friends' have commented that there are two different types of way marker posts are used in the forest. One type is a large round post with the top painted in a bright colour the other type is a smaller square post with an inserted disc.

- Have you had any problems following a way marked trail?
- Was it due to the distance between posts or missing posts?
- Do you find the directional arrows used on the square posts useful?

The Forestry Commission publishes a 'What's on guide' twice a year. The 'Friends' are asked for ideas for inclusion and for feedback following events. Events for children as well as adults are on the programme and they include walks, workshops, cycle rides

- Have you ever attended one of the What's on events? Did you enjoy yourself?
- Would you consider attending an event, if so what would it be?
- If you are not interested in the programme of events is it to do with cost, distance to travel from home, the forest toll or some other reason?

Are you aware that there is a separate building on the High Lodge site at Thetford called Oak Lodge, which is available for hire? Oak Lodge is hidden behind the trees at the far end of the field in front of High Lodge. The building is made of 'green oak' (the same material used in the High Lodge building); it has a kitchen area, toilets and a main room that can seat 30 guests.

- The 'Friends' would like to see this building used more often; do you have any ideas?

Now, having got this far into the article the next bit is important !

Please let the committee have your ideas and opinions before the middle of November so we can fully consider your replies before Christmas and report back to our members in the next newsletter.

You can reply by email to info@fotfp.org.uk or by post or phone to the secretary – but please do respond.

From all the replies we do receive by any means by the 14th November, a random draw will be made and the winner will receive a Venison pack, kindly donated by FC.

News from the Visitor Centre

The winter opening hours for the Visitor Centre are 1000 – 1500 Weekdays, and 0900 – dusk at the weekends, however of course the car parks are open for the normal times. Whilst at the center, why not check out the Xmas menu and special meal arrangements for some seasonal cheer.

Some of you may have noticed that Claire has been missing lately from the catering staff at the visitor centre– The reason being she has given birth to a baby girl, but will be returning to the fold in due course.

The shop at the visitor center will of course carry many items suitable as Christmas gifts, including the forms to become a member of FOTFP. Simply speak to one of the FC staff who will explain the various options available.

Conservation Group News

The Conservation group continues to meet on a regular basis to undertake many varied tasks around the forest; recently we have completed more work on the Goshawk trail route, tidied up the old bat hibernacula at High Lodge and installed new bat boxes at the site of the new hibernacula among other tasks.

Our next meeting is Sunday 13th November when we will be returning to Hills and Holes at Hockham again undertaking some clearance work on the vegetation. We would ask that anyone who wishes to join us on this day, or any future dates (advertised on the website or contact the Secretary) just let us know and we will give you directions and an idea of what we will be doing. The meets are always on a Sunday and run from 0900 to around 1300 although you are free to come for whatever time you can spare. Refreshments are supplied, as are tools and safety gear. Our team leader from FC always conducts a health and safety assessment for the tasks in hand, and on the rare occasions we have to use power tools simple training would be given if needed.

We do however have to insist that anyone joining us is a member to comply with our insurance cover and to ensure adequate refreshments, please do let us know in advance rather than just turning up !! We cannot guarantee the weather but unless it is really bad we do not normally cancel, but at least if we know you are coming it gives us a chance to contact you in the event of a location change due to inclement conditions.

The conservation group really is a very friendly mix of members and have a very varied scope of knowledge on all things forest related so hopefully between us we could answer any questions you may have

The Disabled Bikes

Many of our new members may not be aware that just 12 months ago, one of our projects came to fruition and we were able to make available, for hire from Bike Art at High Lodge, 7 specially adapted bikes for those with a disability. The modifications to these bikes mean they are able to be used by people with a variety of disabilities and enable whole families to experience the Forest on cycles.

Although we only have the figure from last October 2004- July 2005, the cycles have been hire out on a private basis in excess of 400 times and a lot of school, society's and groups have also made regular use of them – some travel as far as from Essex & London specifically to use them.

We are proud that FOTFP were behind the scheme from start to finish, and that it has found such great success since the launch, and that we have made such a difference to so many peoples' enjoyment of the forest here at Thetford.

Finally

It seems far too early as this is written, but may we take this opportunity to wish all our members a Merry Christmas and best wishes for the New Year. We look forward to new horizons for the FOTFP as we enter our second decade with so many members on board, things are looking very promising.