



Friends of

Thetford Forest Park

WITH THANKS TO ALL OF OUR CURRENT CORPORATE MEMBERS:

FIBROTHETFORD
PEARSONS THETFORD
MAY GURNEY

JENNER PRINT
THETFORD GARDEN CENTRE
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Introduction

Welcome to this edition of the newsletter; as I sit here composing this article last summer seems a distant memory whilst 2006 is still in the grip of winter, but there is much to look forward to.

As you will already have seen from the local papers, the concerts planned for this June & July are the most popular ever – UB40 selling out in less than a day is testament to both the forward planning at Santon Downham and the mix of artists booked.

It will not have escaped your notice that this newsletter coincides with the renewal of the memberships; it is a concerted effort on our part to keep administration costs down by not having to send out separate reminders and we would ask that you do renew as soon as possible.

It was decided at the AGM to hold the subscription to the same level as last year despite the ever increasing postal and production costs. This decision was based on keeping our membership total to at least the same as 2005, which peaked at around 450, the largest we have had in our entire 10 year history, so as well as renewing please tell your friends about us and get them to join FOTFP.

The Editor

Mildenhall Warren Lodge Open Day.

Enjoy a visit to Mildenhall Warren Lodge, on Bank Holiday Monday 29th May, between 11am and 4pm.

Learn how rabbits were farmed for their fur and meat, from the fourteenth to the early twentieth century, and enjoy a walk to see the Breckland wildlife and the beautiful scenery.

Warren Lodge is situated in Mildenhall Woods, on the minor road linking the A1065 and the A11 north of the 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. The Lodge is about ten minutes walk up the hill. This medieval building is not open to the public during the rest of the year. You could combine this with a visit to the nearby Rex Graham Reserve for rare plants, which is also holding its' annual open day on Spring Bank Holiday Monday.

For further information please contact Anne Mason on 01760 755685 or the Forest District Office on 01842 810271.

FOTFP Birthday Picnic – Planned for Saturday June 24th at Oak Lodge – Details to follow later.

Fragments of the past – Conservation with a difference!

A Sunday morning last September saw the Friends' conservation group gather behind High Lodge to work on the bat hibernacula prior to the arrival of its residents for their winter sleep. Under Nick Gibbon's direction the flight path leading to the entrance was cleared and new roosting boards hung in the manmade structure.

The bat cave (stop whistling that tune!) is in fact a former WW2 air raid shelter, and, before commencing work its interior was closely scrutinized to see what was there, if any thing. Two Herald moths *Scoliopteryx libatrix* and numerous spiders appeared to be the only ones in residence, but during the course of the examination the method of construction of the original structure was noted. This proved to be a fairly crudely cast affair; flaking concrete revealed a motley of metal work used as reinforcement but it was the return angle of the interior surfaces of the walls and roof that proved most interesting. The joint between the formwork used when the concrete was cast had been closed with old newsprint. This had been folded and twisted into a 'rope' and used to caulk the gap.

A small section of this was carefully detached and Sunday afternoon was spent with demineralised water, fine artist's brush and tweezers, teasing-out the fragments. This revealed the following: an "X-WORD" puzzle *'the results of which will be published in next Sunday's "Sunday Pictorial"'*. 'What the Stars Say' was of interest to young ladies born between March 21st and April 20th; *"Home politics can be stabilized provided you work hard and keep at it. Take care the R.A.F. doesn't sweep you off your feet"*. Young lady Aquarians were warned to be ready for *"... a sudden romance through meeting a friend's friend, possibly in the Army"*, poor girls! Still of a romantic nature was a fulsome article on the meeting and eventual marriage at St. Margaret's Westminster of Winston Churchill and Clementine Hozier. Things of a humorous nature, but still on affairs of heart, came in the shape the eternal triangle between Popeye (and his attractiveness to women), Olive Oil and the infamous Bluto, with poor little Swee'pea gurgling and dribbling on the side line.

On to weighty matters of the moment with an article on Benito Mussolini which seemed to be couched in terms which would prompt today's political leaders to 'phone their lawyers. Another scrap of mouldering paper gave news of one of the few bright interludes in peoples' lives, the cinema. In an article by someone named 'Richards' (has anyone any idea just who this might be?) there were tantalizing references to 'Redheads', "The Bright Lights!" Formby, (George possibly?) and Tommy's (Trinder?) confession that *"... he's now got so much of the root of all evil that he doesn't know what to spend it on"* Yet he apparently continued to cling to the *"old making ends-meet days"*

The time of shortages was reflected within the columns with talk about procuring supplies of newsprint from Newfoundland, this during the era of the 'Wolf pack'. For this ephemeral material to have survived for so long (we estimate 1940-41 as a date for the issue) in conditions best suited to creepy-crawlies is nothing short of amazing.

Conservation Group News

The conservation group continues to meet regularly, and undertakes a variety of tasks – over the last 3 months we have installed the viewing screen on the Goshawk Trail, cleared a dry ditch at Mildenhall and cleared the flight-path into the High Lodge bat hibernacula. Although we have a core of regular participants, working on the old adage of many hands make light work, we are always willing to welcome new people on the day. The dates and tasks are available on the website, or you can contact the secretary for further information. The next dates (both Sundays at 0900 Hr) that we have arranged are:

19th March - High Lodge bird hide - repairs and vegetation management. (Meet at High Lodge coach park)

23rd April - Goshawk trail - broom / hawthorn management opposite the screen and other work on the trail if needed. (Meet at the radio mast at Mayday (past Mayday Farm on the fire road)

FOTFP has six corporate members at present: EPR Thetford (Thetford Power Station); Jenner Print; May Gurney; Pearsons (Thetford) Ltd; Omar Homes and Thetford Garden Centre. Their support is very much valued but Friends would like to increase the number of corporate members and thereby raise awareness of the forest, its wildlife, history and recreation amenities, among more firms and businesses.

Each corporate member receives a range of benefits. These include two complimentary tickets with hospitality to a concert of their choice at High Lodge, together with a further ten tickets at a 10% discount for employees; Four complimentary car-parking season tickets for use by employees and a special annual event. In addition, they receive all the benefits enjoyed by every member of Friends - and they pay £250.00 a year in subscription.

If you are a member of Friends and would like your business to join the corporate membership scheme, please contact me, Anne Mason on 01760 755685 or email anne@providence28.fsnet.co.uk If you would like to nominate a business as a potential corporate member, please contact me also.

All subscriptions go towards Friends' work for Thetford Forest Park so corporate members demonstrate their support for the environment as well as enjoying privileges of membership.

CROW - Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 & how it affects access in Thetford Forest

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 makes new provision for public access to the countryside in England and Wales.

Land to which this new provision applies has been mapped under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 as mountain, moor, heath and common land. Land owners may also decide to dedicate their land for permanent open access; for example, in December 2001 the Forestry Commission decided that the freehold estate in England and Wales would be dedicated wherever possible, giving right of way in perpetuity.

Locally, this means the majority of the freehold estate in Thetford Forest is available for open access. This demonstrates the Forestry Commission's continued commitment to public access, it also means that if in the future the Forestry Commission's estate were rationalised, any change of ownership would guarantee continued public access over that land.

The new right of open access covers most recreational activities on foot. It does not affect the existing rights for cycling or horse riding.

Landowners have the right to suspend or restrict access for up to 28 days each year. Within the Forest this would usually be for reasons of management (e.g. felling), Health and Safety, conservation (e.g. nesting birds), or for events.

More information on access can be found at www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk

FC News

With the new season rapidly approaching, the staffing levels in the restaurant are being bolstered with the addition of a number of seasonal recruits. Plans are also in place to build a new toilet block and other facilities, however this will not be until later in the year due to financial constraints on the works, but they do have to be completed by the end of 2006.

You will also have seen in the press some articles regarding an aerial walkway due to be built on the site, however those articles were somewhat premature – at the time it was only in the very very early planning stages and will not be open this year as the articles seemed to indicate!

You will almost certainly have seen or heard recently that the government has launched a squirrel policy and we reproduce a condensed version here



News Release – *Condensed Version*

Date: 22 January 2006

JIM KNIGHT UNVEILS PLAN TO CONTROL GREY SQUIRRELS

Biodiversity Minister today announced a new action plan to control grey squirrels, focusing on areas where they are damaging woodland and preventing red squirrels from becoming established.

“Many people love grey squirrels, but the reality is that they are a real problem for some of our most threatened native species, like the red squirrel and dormouse. It is not realistic, practical or even desirable to completely eradicate grey squirrels – but we must control them effectively now or there will be serious consequences,” Mr Knight said.

Through the plan, the Forestry Commission will:

- **Support and encourage the effective and humane control of grey squirrels, focussing resources on areas of critical threat to the management of woodland, and public benefits.**
- **Fund, in partnership with others, research into methods of control and forestry techniques that offer effective damage control and management**
- **Continue to monitor and evaluate the damage caused by grey squirrels and the threat they pose to sustainable woodland management**
- **Raise awareness of the need for targeted grey squirrel control**
- **Work in partnership with other organisations, at a local, England, GB-wide and international levels in achieving these policy objectives**

Mr Knight said:

“Grey squirrels seriously threaten woodland management through damage to trees and woodlands and by squeezing out red squirrels and possibly other wildlife like woodland birds.”

“Through humane and targeted pest control in the areas where this damage is most critical, local woodland and wildlife managers – with the full backing and expertise of the Forestry Commission – will be able to control and contain these threats, and preserve or rebalance some of our native ecology.”

The grey squirrel was introduced into this country from North America in the 19th century and has spread widely, especially in lowland areas, with a population now estimated at over 2 million. They are regarded as pests by a number of groups because of the damage they cause to woodland. They are largely responsible for the decline of the red squirrel in England because they are stronger and more adaptable than the red and they carry the Squirrelpox virus, which is lethal to red squirrels.

The Policy and Action Statement, reflects the diverse views and immense interest in this subject from many partners and stakeholders. It can also be viewed on the Forestry Commission website at www.forestry.gov.uk/greysquirrel