



Friends of
Thetford Forest Park

October 2008

NEWSLETTER No. 45

E-mail: info@fotfp.org.uk
Secretary Tel: 01953 601105



SPC printers of Thetford, the one stop shop for all your printing requirements, have again printed this issue of the newsletter for us.

Telephone: 01842 775002

Fax: 01842 775005

Mobile: 07717 327014 or 07717 327019

It does not seem possible that yet another 'Summer' has passed and we head rapidly to shorter days, but here we are in October already. It is now nearly 4 months since the automated parking system was installed at High Lodge, and whilst there were a few teething problems, it is now proving its worth both in the collection of the charges and an important side benefit of enabling FC to have a proper record of the visits, time of entry and length of stay which should help with forward planning for next year.

Being a government body means that FC has suffered, like all departments, cutbacks in funding for the coming year, so the need for this planning is more important than ever. However, you can be assured that Friends will be keeping an eye on all developments to ensure that the services offered remain in the public interest and offer value for money, as this is the only way we can keep people visiting the Forest and enable us to carry out our aims.

As most of you will be aware the 'pay by phone' scheme for the outlying car parks was stopped before the end of its intended trial period due to a number of difficulties and comments from the Public both direct to FC and through ourselves.

Christmas (yes it will soon be with us) at High Lodge will be different this year, but the full details will be posted on the forestry website www.forestry.gov.uk/highlodge

Finally, whatever the weather, spare a little time to visit the forest because it's not just open in the Summer you know.

The Conservation Group is actively seeking new members to come along and help us with the many and varied tasks we undertake. Meeting the 3rd Sunday in a month at various locations around Thetford, members are notified by e mail of the exact details, although there is a list of the intended tasks and places available on the website. No experience necessary, just enthusiasm and the willingness to give up your time on a Sunday morning. If you wish to be added to the mail list just let me know on goodrum.dave@gmail.com

The Secretary, FOTFP, 2 Peacock Chase, Wymondham, Norfolk NR18 0XL

Mildenhall Warren Lodge

It hardly seems possible that the open day this year at Mildenhall Warren Lodge was the sixth such event held by Friends and the second in partnership with Forest Heath District Council's Heritage Open Days. We had twenty-one visitors who came especially to view the lodge and the display about its history and warrening in Breckland. In addition, there were 25 people walking the 'warreners' trail' through the forest and it was very rewarding to see that this route is so well used. I'd like to record my thanks to the FTFP Conservation Group who tidied up the lodge and the trail beforehand; to John Shew for all his very practical help and to Frances Evershed and Rachel Riley, both FC, for supporting the open day. Thanks also to Lizzie Cocker of FHDC for being so willing to work with us and promote the event.

Since its restoration in 2002, the lodge has not had to have any maintenance work but this year the inspection showed that there is some crumbling mortar and loose flints. English Heritage, one of the project's funders, has offered Friends £3 900 for the repair work and this will be carried out by Butlers of Sawston who did the original restoration. We are hoping to have it done before the winter.

Though the lodge itself is open only on the one day a year, you can go on the walk at any time and view the lodge from the outside. If you find High Lodge rather busy at peak times, this is a lovely peaceful alternative!

Anne Mason

Lynford

Work progresses at a steady pace and in the elusive autumn sunshine the arboretum is looking stunning, a credit to team work. The 2009 programme of work has been finalised and with the diminishing amount of effort required on the shrub layer, the group's attention is turning to the measuring of the trees and their identification tags and nameplates. This will enable the arboretum's database to be revised and updated.

In common with other arboreta, gardens and public parks, there have been requests to plant commemorative trees. Because of the potential for the young tree to fail, thus leading to disappointment on the part donor, such requests have had to be declined. However a novel idea imported from elsewhere has been brought into play. This is the sponsorship of established trees which, in human terms, are in their 20s, 30s, 40s and 50s. There are some trees with plaques commemorating people and events and these will be retained but this practice will not be continued. Instead it is proposed to provide the sponsor(s) with a certificate marking the event and also have copy held at the Friends' Lodge for public view. There will also be opportunities to donate to various projects and these donations would be marked in a similar fashion. One tree, an American Red Oak, is being sponsored by a couple from Thetford to commemorate their Ruby Wedding Anniversary. Sponsorship monies will be used to improve the shrub beds and other plantings while the need for more seating along the all ability paths does provide an opportunity to make a donation.

Most of these reports are about what has been happening, this one has turned to face the future; accordingly let us look well into the future, to some point between 2160 and 2210. This is the ideal time slot to harvest oak for structural building works, subject to them having been planted within the next few years. **Interested?**

Mike Hume

2008 A G M

The meeting was held at Oak Lodge on Thursday 9th October and was attended by over 20 members and a number of FC employees.

Your committee for 2008/2009 was elected, and comprises:

ANNE MASON – **Chair**
SHEILA HUME – **Membership & Treasurer**
DAVE GOODRUM – **Secretary, WWW and Newsletter**
ALAN SPIDY
PATIENCE PARKER
MIKE HUME
JUDY ENGLISH
TED SIMMONS
JANET SIMMONS
JOHN SHEW
ANNIE SWANN

All the above were re-elected from 2007/2008 posts, and no new nominations were received.

Once the normal business of the meeting was concluded, we were treated to a very interesting presentation by Giles Brockman of FC on their current projects being undertaken in the area; including a participation session on the plans for the 'Lynford Visitor Zone' now the former gravel pits have been returned to FC after many years of extraction.

This has resulted in the formation of a second water feature, now known as Lynford Water, and almost an hour was spent discussing the many options that could be implemented to attract visitors to the site. One thing that was immediately obvious is that it will be totally different to High Lodge Centre, but that much more consultation will be going on before any plans are finalised.

Friends is closely involved in the project and we will of course keep you up to date with progress as it moves on.

Calendar Photographic Competition 2008/2009

Just a short reminder that you only have until March 2009 to lodge your entries. If you do not have an entry form it can be downloaded from the website, e-mailed to you or even posted upon request.

Disabled Bike Hire at High Lodge

As some of you will remember, in 2004 Friends obtained a grant to purchase some bikes that are able to be used by less able people. These proved to be such a success that it was decided that this year we would fund a further bike – this time an adult sized O-Pair. In line with the others Paul Hill at Bike Art agreed to hire, store and maintain it. From the records that are kept it is obvious that the bikes are popular and well used.

It is safe to say that without Friends involvement this opportunity to hire such bikes would not have happened as the bikes are very expensive to purchase but it all started from a chance remark made by a member, so please if you have any ideas for similar projects please let us know.

Off the Beaten Track – A different slant on walking in the forest

With all the excitement over the achievements of Britain's Olympians this summer, you may not have noticed that Britain also boasts the 2008 World Men's Relay Orienteering Champions. Inspiration enough for me to try one of High Lodge's lesser-known attractions - the Permanent Orienteering Course.

The course, a map of which can be bought from High Lodge's shop for £1-50, has been planned by local orienteers so is a genuine taster for what the sport has to offer. The short course is not technically difficult so is ideal for beginners and young families while the two longer courses offer a choice for those looking for something slightly more challenging.

Orienteering can be described as a cross-country run with a compass and with talk of World Champions and areas on the map described as 'easy' or 'slow running' you might wonder if this is for you but the beauty of orienteering is that you can make of it what you want – a highly competitive sport or an excuse for a stroll in the woods. On a gloriously sunny Autumn's day I chose the latter.

Map in hand, I decided to do the long course – a 5.5 km stroll round the northern part of High Lodge. A confession - it took me a good ten minutes to find the start, not because it was difficult to find but because of my unwillingness to read the clear instructions on the back of the map. For the short course a compass is not really necessary, basic map-reading skills will be good enough but for the longer courses a compass will be helpful for homing in on some of the slightly more technical checkpoints (controls) from an 'attack point' (an easily identifiable point close to a control which you can accurately close in from).

From the start, identified like the other controls by a post with an orange and white diagonally shaded square symbol (and the checkpoint number or, in the case of the start, a triangle), I headed out to explore the less frequently seen parts of the forest. While cyclists may be able to range further, this was an opportunity to leave High Lodge a little way distant and veer away from the beaten track.

None of the course is difficult to walk, a lot of it being down tracks or rides with occasional excursions into plantations to find a control in an old marl pit or on an earth bank, but you might want to wear good water proof boots to stop the autumn dew making your socks soggy, as mine were by the end. And that end came two and a half hours from the start, a leisurely stroll including stops for lunch and photographs (don't forget the Friends photo competition!)

Apart from the permanent course, there are a number of events held by orienteering clubs in the forest throughout the year, suitable for all ages and abilities – a chance to see other parts of the forest you may not have thought of going to. How about trying the event on 16th Nov. at Lynford Stag (Norfolk O Club - www.noroc.co.uk) and then going to check out FOTFP efforts at the nationally acclaimed Lynford Aboreteum ?

Alan Spidy

Finally:-If any more of our members would like to join the mail list to save paper & postage by having their news-letters by e-mail in future, please send an e mail to membership@fotfp.org.uk showing a subject of e-mail newsletter and we will add you to the growing list which is now 6% of the total membership. Thank you.