



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**

The Secretary, F.O.T.F.P., 2 Peacock Chase, Wymondham, Norfolk NR18 0XL - 01953 601105
www.fotfp.org.uk

Benefits of FOTFP membership for you this year

15% off the cost of a 12-month season ticket.	10% off the cost of a 6 month season ticket.
10% off most Shop & Restaurant purchases.	10% off all events, except the concerts.
10% off Oak Lodge or other booked functions.	Quarterly newsletter.
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.	

The Introduction

Firstly we must welcome our many new members to The Friends. It was very gratifying to the committee to see such a large number of people joining for the first time and so many renewals at the same time. This increase in membership is due to the combined efforts of the Committee and the Forestry Commission in revamping both the membership process and the way in which we publicise the work of The Friends, and it is just one example of how we work together to achieve our aims for the Forest.

As this is written we have already seen one major landmark in the summer programme of events take place, and despite the less than seasonal weather, both of the concerts were great sell out successes. You may not be aware that the FC seek our advice when preparing the 'Whats On' guide, and we always try to pass on any comments we receive from our members – so if you have any comments on the current programme or ideas for the future please let us know and we will of course pass them on to the relevant department at Santon Downham.

We can but hope that the rest of the summer is brighter than so far and that we will see many of you out and about in the Forest, but whatever the weather you can be sure of a welcome, and that you are able to make use of some of the benefits of being a member of The Friends whilst visiting. You can be sure that your subscriptions are helping us to continue with ongoing projects and make plans for the future. For those of you who live locally, but have transport difficulties, please see the article on page 2 – it may just be the solution you've been looking for on how to visit this place of many varied things to do and see.

Draw Result

The winner of our Spring draw was a **Mr. M Davies, of Tavernham, Norwich**; who was won two free tickets to any What's On event (except concerts) or two tickets for the Robin Page talk in October. Our congratulations go to him. We will have another draw later in the year, and the only thing you need to enter is a membership number, so every member has an equal chance in the random draw, which is based very simply on a non-member picking a line number from our database of members.

Brecks Bus

Brandon – Elveden – Hockwold-cum-Wilton – Santon Downham – Wangford – Weeting

Brandon Communities Partnership is happy to launch a new service to the Brandon, Thetford and Lakenheath area.

Brecks Bus is a 'demand responsive' service (bookable a day in advance by calling 01842 816170) and is available to take those with transport difficulties to the many places of leisure interest, such as the Country Park, High Lodge, RSPB Lakenheath Fen etc. as well as journeys to and from shopping areas. The bus has pushchair and wheelchair access with trained drivers.

The service will be available on weekdays all year and at weekends during the summer and autumn months. Use of the bus by community groups in evenings may be arranged.

Brecks Bus is funded by Suffolk CC Community Transport, West Norfolk & Brecklands Rural Transport Partnership, Suffolk Rural Transport Partnership, the RSPB and Brecks Project.

Further information is available from Cyril Brown at
'The Flowerpot' London Road Brandon Suffolk IP27 0HY
Tel: 01842 816173 Mob: 07768 517191 Fax: 01842 816179
e-mail: cyril.brown@brandoncop.org.uk

Mildenhall Warren Lodge Open Day

The Spring Bank Holiday Monday, 30th May, was our annual open day at Mildenhall Warren Lodge, the medieval home of a rabbit warrener which Friends restored with grants totalling £49,200 from Forest Heath District council, English Heritage and The Heritage Lottery Fund. Unfortunately, it was typical Bank Holiday weather with lowering skies, thunder and lightning and torrential rain! Not surprisingly, visitor numbers were very low, with only thirty-six people taking the opportunity to see inside the lodge. In our two previous open days, we have had around a hundred visitors each day.

We kept a list of where people had come from and where they had seen the news of the event. There were people from Cambridge and Colchester, Norwich and Thetford, Brandon and Mildenhall, including two Americans from the Base. Most people had seen our press release which Annie Swann had written and distributed for Friends or the poster we had at the Rex Graham Reserve nearby which was also hosting its open day.

I'd like to thank all those committee members who came to help and did so much to welcome our visitors in very damp circumstances. Frances Evershed, from the Forestry Commission, spent the day with us and brought along her family so thank you to them too.

Finally, if you are a new member and haven't seen the warren lodge, please come to next year's Open Day on 29th May when we all hope that the Bank Holiday weather will be kinder to us.

Anne Mason.

Walkies in the Woodlands

Woodland chiefs are banking on dogs leading their owners to better health by signing a new agreement with the Kennel Club.

The Forestry Commission has sealed a pact to make its 1,000,000 Ha of woods nationally as canine-friendly as possible for responsible dog walkers. In East Anglia this means that over 25,000 ha of woodland is available to local dog owners. Similar agreements have been signed in recent years with mountain biking and horse riding organisations, resulting in better access and facilities.

But the benefits of the new alliance are not just for pooches eager for walkies. The Forestry Commission is encouraging more people to venture into woodlands as part of its Active Woods campaign, backed by the British Heart Foundation. The health push is bidding to chip away at the grim statistic that obesity levels have tripled in 20 years. Dog walking is already the most popular form of human woodland recreation. New figures reveal that there up to 60 million dog visits per

year nationally, and that figure indicates significant numbers of people are benefiting their own health as well as that of their pooches.

Locally it is estimated that over 40% of the 2 million visitors to East Anglian forests are dog walkers.

District Forester Giles Brockman of East Anglia Forest District said:

"The health benefits of dog walking are not just restricted to the pet. Going for walkies can be an important part of the recommended 30 minutes of exercise five times a week. But dog walkers need to feel welcome and valued. That's why we are formally undertaking to work with them to resolve any conflicts and understand their needs. Where necessary we will provide better facilities. That could be anything from more drinking bowls to dog washes. And we will only insist on dogs being kept on leads in specific circumstances, such as around play areas or sensitive wildlife sites."

The agreement concludes 18 months of discussions with the Kennel Club, whose secretary Caroline Kisko, added:

"The partnership has enabled us to build good relationships for the future with an important countryside manager. That will help us convey our message of responsible dog ownership."

Other aims of the pact include accommodating dog-related sports in the forest, and promoting the benefits of dog's ownership for people's health, confidence and mobility.

A talk by Robin Page

Date: Tues 18th October 2005

Venue: Santon Downham Village H

Time: 7.30pm- Robin will talk for approx. 30-45 mins. and then have questions.

Title of talk: The Great Betrayal of the British Countryside

Tickets for this upcoming event are £3.00 per person and can be obtained from:

FOTFP Treasurer, 33 Elizabeth Close, Lark's Rise Attleborough Norfolk NR17 1QJ

Friends Benches

Many of our new members may be unaware of the twelve benches provided by the Friends, under the guidance of committee member Basil Edwards, in 2000. These were purchased with funds from the Heritage Lottery to enable the less ambulant or those accompanying persons in wheelchairs around any of the three 'All Ability Routes' within the forest. For those who are unsure of their locations they are to be found at High Lodge, St. Helen's picnic site and at the zigzag walk at Lynford (near Munford).

After four years the affects of the weather was becoming apparent and late last year a survey of their condition was undertaken. This showed that they were generally in good condition and following discussion on the best methods of cleaning it was decided to wait for better weather in late spring. This duly arrived and on the 10th of June Dorothy and Ken Frost, Sheila and myself, armed with a selection of brushes, nylon, natural bristle and wire, wire wool, hard broom and shovel, began the task. Starting with the four at High Lodge plus a memorial bench we have taken under our wing, we evaluated various dry methods of cleaning the oak timber work. After clearing the organic debris from the concrete bases on which each of the benches stand the best method of cleaning the timber work proved to be the very careful application of a wire brush followed by the wire wool.

Moving on to St. Helen's the cleaning of the nine benches was completed by lunch time. Dorothy and Ken have undertaken to look to the four Lynford benches as they live in the Munford area and then keep a watch-in-brief from there on. I am now looking for two small groups of volunteers to pay two visits a year, one to clean the bases and the benches and the second just to clean the bases; total time approximately four and a half hours per year plus travelling time from and to home, not long if you live in the Thetford or Brandon areas. If your interested please contact me on 01953 457529 or mandsu@supanet.com.

The Friends at RAF/USAF Mildenhall

Early on a chilly Saturday morning in April (16th April 2005) saw three intrepid venturers standing to attention at the gates to Mildenhall airbase, passports in hand. The RAF and USAF hold an environment day each year, turn about between the three local bases (Mildenhall, Lakenheath and Feltwell), as just one of a varied programme designed to engage the air force personnel and their families with the host nation.

It has to be said that I was unaware that the previous year's event at Feltwell which Friends attended, had not gone well, as the exhibitors apparently ended up placed in a shopping trolley shed and were also in competition with an antiques show! No guesses who got left out in the cold. So, I should not have been surprised that when it came to asking whether any of The Friends Committee would like to help out again this year, responses were somewhat cool!

However, the British stiff upper lip prevailed and Mike and Sheila Hume agreed to give it another go, along with myself. If you ever do visit one of the USAF bases, the first time in it is a strange feeling to have to present picture ID in Suffolk and have your car searched, but fairly straight forward never the less. It must be said that USAF don't make exceptions as one group of exhibitors found out to and ended up with an early trip home.

The event itself was successful. Being placed inside the main shopping area we saw and talked with many people and were able to pass on masses of information. The bases can be seen as quite closed communities and indeed we met people who were not aware of the forest resource just a few miles from them. But equally, I was also pleased that many people had already visited High Lodge and we were able to talk with them about other parts of the forest. At the end of the day I am also pleased to say that Mike and Sheila enjoyed themselves. Mike especially, as he got his treat of a free Burger King meal!

East Anglia Forest District also displays at the Suffolk and Norfolk County shows each year. If you would like to volunteer to help out on the stand and have some time at the shows in 2006, contact Anne Mason, Chairperson of the Friends and she will hold your details for next year.

Giles Brockman F.C.

Temporary Forest Closures

We are moving our harvesting operations away from Swaffham to other end of forest with most work over the next few months happening in the East and South areas of Kings Forest. This will mean the West Stow picnic site will be closed at some times and there will also be work going on around Kings picnic site, although here it is not expected to result in closure of the site. There will also be work going on over the summer around the exit road from High Lodge which may necessitate a diversion on the Red Walk from Rishbeth.

The harvesting staff do their utmost to minimise the impact on our recreation activities.

Remember that Thetford is a working forest. Please observe all warning signs and proceed with utmost caution in the areas mentioned. Any closures which are as a result of harvesting will normally be reopened after 6pm and for weekends.

Forest Concerts & Other Events

We have just concluded a fantastic weekend of concerts - both sold out, both great fun. The Beautiful South have a special recipe which has made their music popular you almost 20 years, and Friday night was no exception. Madness appeared on stage on Saturday to a roar of applause and cheers, everyone loved it!! The ADP reporter said "you don't just watch Madness - you sing and you dance, and sing, and dance, and sing, and dance - you just can't help it" and that is what people did! In a few weeks time we have more opportunities for musical fun and frolics. Tickets are still available for Daniel Beddingfield and his easy blend of R&B, pop, garage and funk and for Ian Brown, formerly frontman of the Stone Roses. Telephone the box office on 01842 814612 for tickets and information. If you are looking for a slightly more classical evening try Illyria's brand of Shakespeare with 'The Comedy of Errors' on Saturday July 30th. This is Shakespeare at his most boisterous and farcical, an hilarious comedy of mistaken identity.

For entertaining the children once school is out we are offering Elvish Antics, Fairy Tales, Discovery Days and Craft Days as well as cycle rides, walks and wildlife events. see the What's On for details.

Come to High Lodge and see what is going on have a go on the new play equipment and try the menu. See you there,

Frances F C

The Friends 10th Anniversary

In contrast to the Open Day at Mildenhall Warren Lodge, the weather could not have been more perfect on the evening of 21st June when we held an event at Oak Lodge to mark ten years of Friends of Thetford Forest Park. We invited all those who had helped us in some way during this time, including those who go on the conservation tasks, corporate members, our funders, Forestry Commission staff and past members of the committee.

As about fifty people had accepted our invitation, we divided into two groups and Ron Hoblyn and Nick Gibbons each led a forest walk which highlighted why the forest is such a wonderful place. We are very grateful to them both. Back at Oak Lodge, everyone enjoyed wine and a light buffet supper and then Ron Hoblyn, as a founder member of Friends, cut the birthday cake for us.

In addition to our largest ever membership, now approaching four hundred, we were celebrating having raised £72 000 for projects in the forest in our ten years. It was a very special evening and I would like to thank those members of the committee who worked so hard to make it such a success, especially John Shew and Sheila and Mike Hume.

Anne Mason