



Friends of

Thetford Forest Park

WITH THANKS TO ALL OF OUR CURRENT CORPORATE MEMBERS:
E P R THETFORD
PEARSONS THETFORD
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OMAR HOMES

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Questionnaire Results

Firstly can we say a huge thank to the many of you who completed and returned the questionnaire. The number of forms we got back far exceeded our expectations, and have enabled us to do some real analysis of our members needs and preferences. For a brief resume of the results, please see pages 3 & 4.

Fungal notes from the Forest,

I am sure that many of you will enjoy seeing these fascinating plants as you are out and about in the Forest this Autumn. The Friends Fungal Foray is on Monday 16th October, for other events see the What's On.

A few suggestions to help you if you go out mushrooming

- Only pick what you are sure of and what you can use for yourself. Some fungi are good to eat, some are poisonous, a few are deadly and some are very rare.
- Go out with someone who knows, take a field guide – join a Fungal Foray!
- Only pick fully open fungus.
- **Commercial picking is not permitted in the Forest**
- Obey all signs

Did you know?

- There are at least 70,000 species of fungi worldwide and approximately 12,000 species in the UK.
- Fungi have a thread like hyphae, which form an underground web. This is present all year. The fruiting bodies (mushroom and toadstools) only appear above ground when conditions are right, usually in the Autumn.
- Unlike many other plants, fungi cannot make their own food using energy from the sunlight, but grow by absorbing food and water from other plants and animals, both living and dead. Many fungi live in association other plants benefiting both the fungus and the host plant; some of these fungi are host specific, which helps identification.
- Fully open fungus will have already discharged their spores and will give you a bigger tastier mushroom than a 'button'.

Conservation

- Fungi are under threat due to habitat loss and pollution. In some areas the situation is worsened by over picking. Over picking stops fungi spreading their spores and strips areas bare so that there is nothing for others to enjoy, it also removes a food source for other wildlife.
- Over 1000 species of insects and other creatures depend on fungi for food and shelter.

See you at the Friends Fungal Foray on 16th October at Brandon Country Park at 1030. Booking is essential so please ring 01953 457520 to reserve your place. Tickets are £ 4.00 per person and there will only be a limited number of places.

The Friends Volunteer Scheme

One thing that came out of the recent questionnaire results was that a number of our members are willing to help us in the many smaller tasks that need doing in order to keep the forest appealing to visitors. To this end we are starting a register of those able to give some time, and to ensure we can better target the work we would ask that, if you are one of those who showed an interest and have no objection to your details being on file with us and FC, you complete the simple form enclosed and return it using our freepost address.

Forest Closures

The work in the High Lodge area will continue this autumn and winter but we will continue to minimise the impact on the public as much as possible. Felling in the area of the Arboretum is expected to recommence in November and will cause some disruption. The other area of work is in the West side of Kings Forest. Generally forest operations do not take place during evenings and weekends. Please observe all signs.'

2006 AGM – Thursday 12th October 1900 Hrs

Once again this year we have to thank FC for allowing us the use of **High Lodge** for the meeting. As usual the AGM will be preceded by a buffet, and followed by a presentation. This year Richard Brookes of FC will be explaining to us the Forest Design Plans and how the forest looks the way it does. Having already had a preview of the subject at one of our committee meetings, we are sure you will find it very interesting how FC achieve the balance between the differing needs of the Forestry, Conservation, Public Access and use of the land under their control. If you intend coming to the meeting we would ask that you complete & return the enclosed slip to the freepost address so that we can organise the seating & catering for the buffet.

Conservation Group

With a view to the increasing interest in the group, we have decided to arrange the meetings to a set timetable and to this end we now meet every 3rd Sunday in the month at 9 o'clock. Once we have finalised the work or area we will be in, the details will be on the website, or you can contact us on the usual e-mail address, or you can phone the secretary. If you would like to be added to the e-mail list please also let the secretary know and you will automatically be notified of the location of the next meeting. This we try to get out at least a week prior to the Sunday, but with Winter approaching sometimes it is necessary to make last minute changes so the e mail list is the best way of getting the information you need. For September we will be at Hills & Holes, and in October we will be at High Lodge Hide area.

Friends' Questionnaire is put to good use:

Shortly after we had begun to receive replies to our questionnaire, we had a request from Giles Brockman of The Forestry Commission for our thoughts and comments on the future development of Thetford Forest Park.

The committee spent the August meeting discussing all the issues, looking at potential sites which might take the pressure off High Lodge at peak times and at raising awareness of the wildlife and heritage without destroying the peace and wildness of the forest park. I then wrote a report on our discussions and was able to draw on the answers to the questionnaire to support our recommendations and conclusions.

By another coincidence, I was invited to a consulting workshop organised by The Brecks Partnership to consider 'Recognition for the Brecks' and 'Breckland Access and Tourism Strategy'. Members of the partnership include the District Councils, The Brecks Countryside Project and The Forestry Commission. There were representatives from all the organisations involved in Breckland such as archaeologists, naturalists and landowners. We were asked to explain what 'The Brecks' means to us; what we see as its problems and how they might be addressed.

Pressure on the landscape and natural resources, particularly water, from new housing and development was of great concern. Most people welcomed the encouragement of tourists and visitors to the area but felt that it should be on a sustainable basis. I was able to quote the results of FOTFP survey to show that people come to the forest mainly for the natural beauty and the peace and quiet of their surroundings. The proposal to have Breckland declared a regional park or given another landscape designation was also discussed.

There is to be a follow-up workshop later in September and I hope to attend and report its conclusions in our next newsletter.

Anne Mason.

High Lodge Christmas Event Changes

In response to customer feedback we've changed the format of this year's event at High Lodge.

Many people were disappointed at the apparently haphazard distribution of festive entertainment during December. Quality of entertainment was also a significant concern.

Unfortunately the unique make up of the Christmas event makes it financially marginal and this adds to the challenge so in an effort to deal with this we are introducing two 'peak weekends', where we will increase the charge £2.00 over a non-peak visit and focus the entertainment on these days. For more details please see the enclosed information leaflet.

As a Friend of the Forest you are still entitled to book two children in to see Santa as part of your membership package. However if you wish to book at any of the peak times you will be asked to contribute £2.00/child but there will be no additional charge at other times.

Peter Rawlinson
High Lodge Attraction Manager

Questionnaire Results

First of all, thank you! We had a hugely positive response to our questionnaire – around 25% of those sent out were returned. This was very encouraging for the Committee and has given us things to think about in the coming year. Don't forget that you can further influence things by attending the AGM on 12th Oct.

The aim of the questionnaire was two-fold. Firstly, for us to get to understand the membership more closely: why people join and stay, what is the most effective way of recruiting new members, how can we encourage active participation with the membership. Secondly, and more importantly, for you to let us know what you think – what, if anything, would you like us to do?

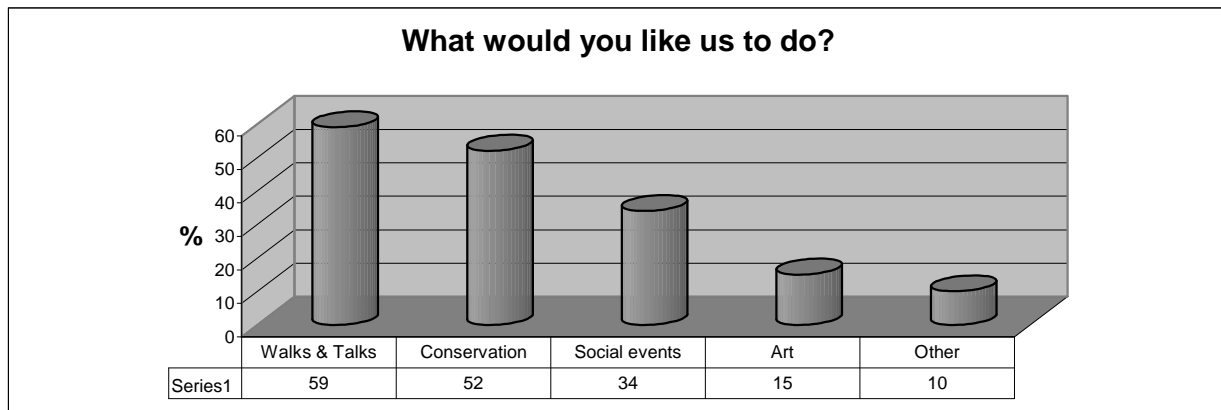
So, what did you tell us? Perhaps not surprisingly the season ticket package is a major incentive to join (58%) but a bigger desire was to help the forest generally (81%) though participation in conservation work was a low priority (5%). Most of you first heard of the Friends through F.C sources, either the season ticket renewal form (43%) or a leaflet from High Lodge (46%). And almost everybody visits the forest at some stage, a third of you on at least a weekly basis.

An interesting part of the questionnaire involved your interaction with the forest. Although sporting activities were popular (31%), simpler pursuits were enjoyed by most - walking (68%), finding peace and quiet (56%) and seeing wildlife (42%). As for what you would like from us, informal educational events (59%), conservation projects (52%) and social meetings (34%) seemed most popular. Worthy of note is that while conservation work scored well, a very small number could afford the time to get regularly involved at Lynford (2%) although a significant proportion of you could occasionally do so (25%).

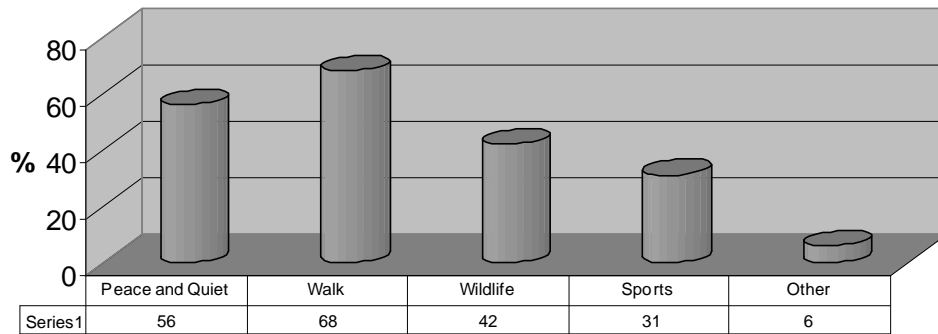
Of the work already achieved by Friends, it is perhaps disappointing that many of the projects seem relatively unknown. The most widely known project was the High Lodge oak tree sculpture (56%). Some of these projects have been widely acclaimed, such as the Mildenhall Warren Lodge restoration, Bat Hibernaculum and Goshawk Trail so maybe we need to blow our own trumpet a little more!

It is clear that there is a wide range of interests represented in your responses and our achievements together - conservation, art, recreational activity, education – and hopefully we will continue into the future.

A. Spidy & P. Parker



Why do you visit the forest?



9. Your suggestions to increase member participation?

- Friends to purchase tickets for concerts before going on sale to the general public
- Better Advertising
- Approach local schools
- Better publicity of what you have achieved at High Lodge
- Email newsletters
- Regularity - regular events
- Links to education
- Continue promoting the forest outlining excellent facilities
- Emphasise how cheap a day out in the forest is
- Family activity events
- Children's fun days
- Recruit a friend and get discount on your membership
- To participate in events at H/L & Brandon Park
- Target younger people i.e. kids of members
- School participation
- Go into schools
- Canoe in the River Thet & Little Ouse
- Taster Day for prospective Friends
- Guided and Information walks would help recruitment
- Badges to advertise the club at a small charge
- BBQ's by staff, more vegetarian food
- Go Ape for under 12's
- Posters in local villages and schools
- Visit local schools & give talks
- Advance notice of conservation projects
- Wider advertisement & publications
- Give leaflet out with cars park entry ticket
- Litter pick followed by BBQ
- Activity leaf rubbing for free, display & talks
- Fundraising activity

Calling Friends who like to Spook!

The Halloween extravaganza is taking place again this year at High Lodge. It was a great success last year and we're expecting even more from it this year.

Tasks include prop making, dressing up, saying boo a lot and generally having a lot of fun if you are interested in helping out and want more information please contact Peter Rawlinson on 01842 816016 or peter.rawlinson@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

Come and meet your committee at the A G M