



JANUARY 2007

NEWSLETTER No. 39

E-mail: info@fotfp.org.uk

Tel: 01953 601105

Welcome to the first newsletter of 2007. By the end of last year our membership had increased to over 500 members which is very good news for us.

The excellent response to last years' questionnaire had enabled us to put all your comments through to the Forestry Office at Santon Downham for them to analyse and incorporate into their future plans and by the end of 2006 the new toilet block was completed at High Lodge, and is a welcome addition to the facilities already in place in this ever-busier location.

However not everyone is interested in a 'busy' forest and it should not be forgotten that High Lodge is only a small part of a very large forest area - There are still plenty of places where the forest is much quieter if you simply want to walk and observe the wildlife in peace and solitude.

Even at High Lodge it is possible to move away from the visitor centre only a few hundred yards and discover the newly renovated wild life hide, which the conservation group was instrumental in reviving and making accessible to all - no longer do you need to climb the steps to enter the hide as a ramp has been put in to enable access for those who less mobile or in a wheelchair.

This was another example of what can be achieved by a small group bringing to the FC's attention a shortcoming in the existing facilities and helping to put it right, so if you have an idea how to improve an existing area or an idea for something new, please let us know so we can pass it on to FC for them to consider in their future plans.

The Editor

Forest closures will be due to clear felling in the Mundford and Hockwold areas, thinning in the area of Lynford Water (Gravel Pits), and possibly at the Arboretum. Thinning will also be happening at Elveden. Please obey and signs in the areas, they are for your safety.

You will be aware that large-scale changes to the postal service last year have dramatically increased our administration costs and in view of the widespread availability of the internet, we would ask anyone who is willing to have future newsletters e-mailed to them instead of through the post please to let us know.

The newsletter is also downloadable from our website in both pdf and word format if you do not have an e-mail address. The decision was made at the last AGM not to increase the membership fee for 2007, but as a result this means that a higher proportion of your subscription goes in postal costs, so the more members that can help us by reducing these costs the better.

There is no intention to move towards e-mail only, but we have to move with the times if we are to leave enough funds to carry through other projects, so if you want to be added to the e mail list, please send a mail to membership@fotfp.org.uk and we will make the changes.

Please be assured that your mail address will not be passed to any third party and will only be used by us to send you the newsletters and any other information.

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

The Lynford Arboretum Project

Last year the Forestry Commission approached Friends and asked us to assume the care of Lynford Arboretum. This request raised many eyebrows and even more questions; what was meant by 'care'? What would be involved? Were there any time scales we would be expected to achieve? These were just a few, a very few, of the many questions posed.

Over the autumn and early winter a series of meetings, a site visit and a conservation day were convened and the size of the task became apparent. Firstly, 'Care' does not include the trees themselves or the cutting of the grass; the Commission will continue to undertake these jobs.

Our involvement is needed in the maintenance of the hard path system, which is suitable for persons in wheelchairs, the seats and benches (something Friends are already doing elsewhere in the forest), keeping the grounds free of litter, fortunately not a big problem here, and the shrub beds. These, at first sight, looked formidable, but four hours and eight or nine people on a Sunday morning showed that small inputs of effort on a regular basis can and would bring the arboretum up to a very acceptable standard.

The site has suffered from years of under funding (Not the FC's fault!) and there seems little if any prospect of the situation changing. The Commission made it quite clear that there were no times scales being set, more, if Friends took the task on we would set our own pace.

A simple, joint, management structure is envisaged to guide effort and thought; the effort, on a week-by-week basis and thought about the future. To look to the need for any training requirements; safety and the needs of the volunteers; things you can't work out on the back of an envelope.

But why all this effort you may ask? Simply because it is, in scientific terms, a place of some importance; yes the commission has other arboreta however Lynford is sited on Breckland's thin and impoverished soil, which is interesting in its self, it also contains examples of the Serbian Spruce, sadly rare in its native land and on the UN's list of endangered species. Could not this arboretum continue in much the same way as it is? In scientific terms, yes, however this is a tranquil place which deserves better. It requires care and explanation, the care of its uniqueness and the explanation of its importance.

Coming up to date; early last December 122 members who live within a twenty five minute drive of the arboretum were contacted and invited to express an interest, or otherwise, in the formation of the Lynford Arboretum Group. With Christmas around the corner it probably was not the best time to try and engage people in thinking about this project but it has been heartening in the numbers responding; if you haven't, please do so.

Now is the time, however, to open the invitation to all the members of Friends, so if you are interested in helping with the project please contact me on **01953 457520** or e-mail to **mandsu@supanet.com** and I will forward to you a response form and a prepaid envelope.

M. Hume – Project Co-Ordinator

Following the successful joint meeting with The Breckland Society last year, we are holding another, on **20th February**, when Nick Gibbons is going to talk about 'The Wildlife of Thetford Forest Park'. This is at **7.30pm at Thetford Grammar School**, a new venue for both societies.

The talk will be in the Old School, by kind invitation of the Governors and the Headmaster. Please park in the public car park opposite and stewards will be on hand to guide you to the Old School.

Tickets are £3.00 and can be reserved (please telephone 01760 755685) or obtained at the door.

Membership Report.

As at the end of 2006 the total membership stood at 502; this figure includes the 6 corporate and 7 honorary members.

Almost 150 members took up their option of tickets to Santa's Workshop and we hope that your young ones enjoyed the experience.

There have been reports from a few members that details of this event did not reach them, but the newsletter and full details of all Christmas events were posted in early October to enable members to take advantage of the priority-booking period. It appears that some mail may have gone astray and checks have been made with the post office, but it is not possible to trace individual mailings unless proof of posting is taken out when it is sent, and with over 500 items this is just not practicable for us. We are investigating ways of marking the outside of the envelopes so members are aware of the contents.

We have to apologise to any member who has been disappointed, but the information was sent to each and every member at the addresses we have in our records.

Would you please inform Friends of any changes in the names and/or addresses to which you wish the information to be sent to; also if you have season tickets please let the Forestry Commission know of these changes.

S. Hume – Membership Secretary

SOME EXERCISE FOR YOUR BRAIN

C	G	R	K	R	A	P	R	A	C	B	I
U	D	E	E	R	N	O	A	S	B	W	I
B	I	R	D	S	I	V	P	N	R	I	E
B	O	E	L	V	E	D	E	N	Q	L	G
V	M	U	T	E	R	O	B	R	A	D	D
F	F	O	R	E	S	T	L	S	A	L	O
R	D	R	O	F	T	E	H	T	Z	I	L
I	E	V	Z	M	A	Y	D	A	Y	F	K
E	G	D	O	L	H	G	I	H	Z	E	A
N	Y	I	R	A	N	G	E	R	O	I	O
D	O	P	T	R	E	E	S	J	O	H	S
S	B	R	A	N	D	O	N	H	U	Q	F

The following words are hidden, and could read in any direction – see the hint

ELEVEN **CARPARK** HIGHLODGE ARBORETUM BIRDS BRANDON DEER FOREST

FRIENDS MAYDAY OAKLODGE RANGER THETFORD TREES WILDLIFE

Foresters Log January 07

Firstly a very Happy New Year to all of you. We had a very successful Christmas season this year. Santa was so, so busy with almost every opportunity to see him taken. I am sure he is now taking that well-earned break. Thank you especially to those members of Friends who helped the Forestry Commission at this event, we are very grateful for the support you provide at these busy weekends.

Flushed with success

Spending a penny at High Lodge should be easier from the Spring – the Forestry Commission have splashed out on its visitors wishing to answer the “call of nature”!

Local builders, Kybird, successfully bid for the contract and at the end of December they handed the building over to the Forestry Commission on time and within budget. This project has been funded by European Union Objective 2 Funding, Breckland District Council and the Forestry Commission.

Work to construct paths and landscape the surrounding areas is currently underway and the new toilet block will be open for use at the start of the new season on 31st March 2007.

Forest Toll

Entry to High Lodge is now TOLL FREE until the end of March except for weekends and school holidays, so why not come and enjoy the mild winter we are having and breath the forest air! From April 1st Forest Toll for cars will be £6. This increase is due to an administrative change, which means the Forestry Commission is now liable to pay VAT on this charge. If you go for the season ticket ‘joint deal’ you can get a reduction in the cost of the season ticket by also joining Friends.

Cycling Around

We already have in place our new Cycle leaflet, which has been produced with our corporate look and includes the new Red Route. This is 11 miles of mostly single track, less challenging than the Black Route, but for the experienced rider. Recommended for aspiring cyclists over 12 years old. The leaflet is for sale for £1 from High Lodge and the Forest District Office and as before is printed on waterproof ‘paper’

Play equipment on picnic sites

The Forestry Commission has had to accept budget cuts over the last few years, and as a result of this we have had to make cutbacks in some of our facilities. The play equipment at St Helens and at Lynford Stag has unfortunately been removed recently for Health and Safety reasons. The ongoing cost of the safe upkeep of play equipment has made this necessary.

The Concerts are coming

If you, too, are looking forward to information about this years concerts, visit the FC website www.forestry.gov.uk/music and join the email list or you could join the postal mailing list by calling 01842 814612 and leaving your details.

Frances – F.C.

If you are a senior citizen, why not enjoy a splendid 2 course lunch at High Lodge in the heart of Thetford Forest on Thursday January 25th or Thursday February 22nd or Thursday March 22nd

January menu : Beef Olives with Seasonal vegetables and potatoes; Gateau/Fresh Fruit Salad; Tea/Coffee.

February menu : Toad in the hole with Seasonal vegetables and potatoes; Gateau/Fresh Fruit Salad; Tea/Coffee.

March Menu : Spring Chicken in White Wine Sauce, with seasonal vegetables and potatoes; Rhubarb crumble and custard; Tea/coffee

Advanced Booking essential - please call 01842 816000 Please state any dietary requirements when booking. £7 per person **10% discount for 'Friends'**. Forest Toll does not apply