



# Friends of Thetford Forest Park

**AUTUMN/WINTER 2010 NEWSLETTER No. 50**

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**Welcome to the second newsletter of 2010 – and in fact this is the fiftieth one to be sent out to our members.**

Looking back over the issues I have overseen since 2001, it still comes as a pleasant surprise to see the growth in both member numbers and what FOTFP have achieved over that time, much of which would not have happened without both the financial support and participation of our members.

With the Forestry Commission facing massive changes, as do all Government Departments, you can be assured that The Friends will be at the forefront of any support the local FC office needs, but to achieve this we in turn will need your support, and to this end we only ask that you continue to be members of this organisation which has at its heart a way of ensuring that there can be a dialogue between members of the public and a large Government Body. The more members, the louder the voice!!

With the start of this summer being blessed with such glorious weather for almost 6 weeks on end (seems a while ago now..) after such a bad Easter, High Lodge enjoyed a very buoyant period - being a mainly outside attraction the weather has a huge effect on visitor numbers and something as simple as rain at lunchtime can have a knock on effect for the rest of the day. This year has seen yet more attractions added on and around the field all of which have proved very popular, and generated extra income for the site.

One children's' attraction was added just in time for the school holidays was the 'stamp trail' and we are proud to say FOTFP funded over 75% of the cost to get it up and running.

**In conclusion then it looks to be a challenging period ahead for us, but with your help & support we can look forward to another 50 issues,  
Thank you**

## BRANDON WARREN LODGE

Having been baked by summer sun, soaked by winter rains and totally blown away by autumn winds, Friends finally managed some perfect spring weather when they met for the latest archaeological dig at the site of Brandon Warren Lodge on 9th May.



Joined by members of the Breckland Society and the Forestry Commission the group, under the guidance of Colin Pendleton from Suffolk County Archaeological Unit, aimed to discover the extent and age of the Lodge walls.



Preliminary findings confirmed several phases of construction from the medieval period through to the 19th Century, proving that the lodge had been in continual use for several hundred years.

A further dig is tentatively planned for next spring so if you want to get involved, watch this space!

# **HALLOWEEN -PLEASE HELP**

**Dear Friends,**

We are deep in the planning stages of this years Halloween event and I have to say that I am very excited about what's being planned.

- For those of you who don't know about the Halloween event at High Lodge essentially it is a three-day spooky event that has something for all the family:

- 
- Tread carefully along the TERROR TRAIL.....**
- Enter the HOUSE OF HORRORS if you dare**
- Play games and have fun in the GATHERING.....**
- 

Basically the House of Horrors and Terror Trail will be a scary experience with spooky lighting, sound effects, smoke machines, atmospheric lighting, actors reenacting spooky scenes, clever effects with mirrors, moving pictures, static scares e.g. UV dancing skeletons and the Gathering is essentially like a village fete with a spooky twist. There will be hot food and drink and candyfloss / toffee apples etc.

We need volunteers to help make this event a success!!!

We are looking for volunteers to help with this event and there are a number of roles that we need people for. One is welcoming guests and answering questions (stewards), One might be ticket collection, One might be selling tokens in the gathering and there are other possibilities.

So if you fancy helping out with one, two or all three of the nights I can promise you it will be a lot of fun and we will also give you free hot food and tea and coffee!!

If you are interested please contacted me direct and we can discuss what you would like to do.

**Glyn Bradbury**

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## WILDLIFE RANGERS

On the warm, sunny morning of 26th March, twenty members of FOTFP gathered at Santon Downham to learn about the management of deer in the forest and the work of the Wildlife Rangers. After a welcome by Trevor Banham, Wildlife Ranger Manager, and from Jim Lyon, Forest Management Director, we were divided into four groups, with each group being led by one of the Rangers.

We were taken to see the deer larder, a model of its kind, where the strict hygiene rules and procedures were explained to us, including how the deer are prepared for collection by the game-dealers and how the tagging system is operated as the deer enters the food chain. The equipment used by the Rangers was on display, including the rifle, winch and trays for collection in the field and the portable ladder style 'high seat' used for viewing a wide area. We also were shown a thermal image camera and an image intensifying night sight which are used to gather data on the deer populations in the forest.

Set out especially for us were the skulls of the four main species of deer in the forest: Muntjac, Roe, Fallow and Red, with the Chinese Water Deer and Sika Deer represented with one skull each. It was fascinating to see the variation in colour and form of the antlers and to learn that red deer antlers take on the colour of the sap of the tree they rub against, with pine resin giving the darkest tone. Deformities in the antlers or tines could be as a result of accidental damage to the antler while it was growing 'in velvet'

Perhaps the most exciting part of the morning was the simulated deer stalk where in an area of woodland, the Rangers had positioned deer silhouettes. Our task was to find them, identify the species and decide whether it was a safe environment in which to shoot, taking into account the nearness of a public path or the dense undergrowth part-hiding the deer or the presence of a calf.

It was altogether a brilliant experience in which we learnt so much about the life of the deer, the different species, their impact on the forest environment and their management. It was a privilege to learn from such a dedicated, committed and skilled team of Rangers who gave up their morning to tell us about their work. We are very grateful to them all and this is an opportunity to say 'thank you' so much to them, on behalf of Friends.

Subsequent to the event, we received the following e mail from two of our members who came along -

*Dear Anne*

*We just wanted to thank you so much for arranging the Wildlife Rangers morning last week. It was apparent that quite a lot of organising and preparation had gone into providing what turned out to be a superb insight into the work of the wildlife rangers. We had absolutely NO idea of what is going on behind the scenes although we visit Thetford Forest on a regular basis and occasionally (not that often) catch a glimpse of a deer. It was so informative and extremely interesting.*

*So thank you again and please pass on our sincere thanks to all the rangers who treated us so well and were very patient in answering the endless questions.*

*Kind regards*

*Deanne Richards and Gerald Baggs*



**1924**

**Estate of 6000 Acres sold to FC**



**1945**

**FC establishes Forestry Training School in the Hall**



**1946-56**

**Arboretum planted to the east of the hall**



**1970**

**FC sells of the hall and some of the grounds, but retains the arboretum**



**1970-1990's**

**Arboretum open to public and cared for by FC**



**2006**

**FC asks FOTFP to look into taking over the care of the Arboretum.**

**After much considering of the implications of taking over the care of such an important site, the committee approved the request.**



**2007**

**FOTFP take over  
Tools purchased  
clearance work  
Hamamelis (Wit  
cleared & re pla**



**2008**

**Many existing tr  
and re labelled.  
The lodge arrive  
and information  
Moth surveys re  
different species  
Planting of shrub  
Thanks to groun  
grass cutting by  
possible.**

# LYNFORD ARBORETUM



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**2009**

**Full tree audit completed and recorded, including gps locations**  
**Wild Flower meadow created**  
**30 more specimen trees planted**  
**Successful grant application to Awards For All to fund the first set of interpretation boards seen on the site**

**New benches commissioned and sites prepared.**

**Clearance work continues removing many overgrown and unwanted shrubs and self-sown trees that threaten to push out the specimen varieties.**



**2010 so far !!**

**New benches installed**

**Serbian Spruces planted**

**Continued clearance of shrubs**

**Cub Scout Naturalist badge day held followed the week after by**

**American Scouts badge day**

**Open Day for the Public**

**FC survey places Lynford as the 3rd most significant Arboretum in the country**

## LYNFORD NOTES

The new planting season will soon be with us and our thoughts have already turned to the tasks ahead. This will commence with the sighting of some sixty shrubs in the upper four planting sections of the arboretum. Whilst some will be dotted about these sections as replacements for rhododendrons being removed on plant health grounds, most will be concentrated along the line of the northern portion of the service track which passes down through the site from Lynford Road to the bridge. It will help to define the eastern edge of this area of the collection. These will include nine varieties of *Berberis* (20 specimens), four *Hypericum*, two *Olearia* (4 specimens), one *Ostrya* and *Rhamnus* (5 specimens). There will be a further nine *Cornus* (23 in total) including 'Eddie's White Wonder', not so much a shrub but more like a small tree; they are all resin bearing plants, therefore maintain one of the themes of the whole collection.

To the above will be added a Japanese Pepper Tree, *Zanthoxylum piperitum*; whilst it is called a tree it in fact seldom grows to more than two metres by two metres even in its native habitat. As its names suggests it is to be found in Japan, but also in China and the Korean peninsula. This specimen has been grown at Bedgebury in Kent, from seed collected by a team from the Westonbirt Arboretum from a roadside bush, high in the mountainous Nakakawane Forest on Honshu, the largest of the Japanese islands.



Whilst not a true pepper, its cooked seed is ground into a powder and used as a pepper substitute. The fruit can be heated to bring out its full flavour and is mixed with salt for use as a table condiment; in a dry roasted state, the seeds can be ground and used to form an ingredient of the Chinese 'five spice powder'.

The bruised leaves are reputed to be the most powerfully aromatic of all leaves. In the area of 'high science' an essential oil



obtained from resin which appears to concentrate in its roots, is being investigated by the University of Chiang Mai in Thailand. It is seen as a possible, natural alternative to N,N-diethyl-3-methylbenzamide (DEET).

Early findings suggest that it may be more efficacious than the above synthetic substance in warding-off the attentions of mosquitoes. This seems to be of interest to the US National Institute of Health, possibly because of military concerns over certain aspects of DEET.

The plant its self is armed with some formidable thorns, so planting and future care will need to be undertaken with a degree of circumspection. To produce seed our Pepper Tree, which is of unknown gender, would require a mate; I fear that it is destined for a celibate existence at Lynford.

Still with science in mind, Lynford Arboretum played host to a PhD student from the Department of Geography, University of Cambridge who is studying the response of beech trees to climate change. He spent two very full days with us, taking cores from twenty-two trees in the 'close canopy' plot in the arboretum's SE corner. Copies of his findings will be logged with the FC and, hopefully will be available at the Friends' Lodge.

If you would like to become part of this endeavour, just three or four mornings a year would be great, please contact Mike Hume on 01953 457520 or [mandsu@supanet.com](mailto:mandsu@supanet.com)

### **Upcoming Meeting Dates:**

The **second Sunday** and the **third Wednesday** of each month, plus other Sunday and Wednesday mornings which are a somewhat movable feast.

Those interested should enquire or look at the website. As always, the hours are between 0930 and 1300.

## **NIGHTJAR EVENT**

### **in conjunction with FC**

The evenings of 29th June and 31st July were warm and still, perfect conditions for nightjars.

A total of 20 people gathered just north of Santon Downham as dusk fell, most members of Friends and a few responding to publicity on the Forest lychgates but all with an interest in one of Britain's most enigmatic birds.

Nightjars are summer visitors, arriving in May to breed. They nest on the ground in clearings in the forest, making only a shallow depression for their eggs, but what makes them so amazing is that they are active only at night, spending the daylight hours motionless on the ground, superbly camouflaged by their mottled brown and grey plumage. They feed on moths and other flying insects, catching them in their large gaping mouths.

We were particularly fortunate to have as our guides Ron Hoblyn, ex-Forestry Commission Conservation Officer and Britain's leading experts on nightjars, and Neal Armour-Chelu, the current FC Conservation Officer. They told us about the nightjar's life cycle and how, in the past, it was called 'night-hawk', 'night churr' or 'fern hawk' but perhaps its strangest name was 'goatsucker'. In fact, its scientific Latin name of *Caprimulgus* means exactly that and comes either from a supposed association with Puck, the spirit of the dark who tormented travellers and stole milk or from the belief that nightjars themselves milked goats !

It was certainly a magical experience to hear and see the birds for ourselves as darkness fell over the forest. We had walked a short distance to an area of clear-fell and then suddenly the air was filled with the male nightjar's unmistakable 'churring' call, rising and falling in the stillness. Very soon, we were seeing them too, as they flew round just overhead and even did some 'wing-clapping' in display. On the second night, we found one of the 'singing posts' and were entranced as the male sat along the branch, silhouetted against the sky, and slowly twisted his head from side to side, making his song even more eerie.

That the nightjars are in the forest at all is due to the Forestry Commission's management. All areas of the forest have design plans which regulate not only timber production but also meet the needs of wildlife. By ensuring that there are always clearings of young trees which are the nightjar's preferred habitat, Thetford Forest is one of the best places in the country for this species. Following on from the successful Nightjar evenings, the Friends Conservation Group had the opportunity to help the research project currently being undertaken by the BTO, UEA and FC.

Not too much is known of the habits of one of Breckland's most enigmatic birds so a programme of radio tagging has begun. This allows the location, range and activity of the birds to be followed. But before they are tagged they have to be found!

And that's where the Conservation Group came in, spending their July event in the company of wildlife and bird experts, walking rows of young conifers looking for the Nightjar's nest.



Though we quickly found evidence of things airborne (including parts of airframe!) the elusive Nightjar remained, well, elusive till near the end of the morning when a nesting bird was finally found. The site was logged and the BTO now have another bird to tag!

The conservation group meets every 3rd Sunday in the month, times and locations can be found on our website [www.fotfp.org.uk](http://www.fotfp.org.uk)

## FOTFP AGM

In accordance with our Constitution, the date was set for this years meeting as Thursday October 7th, 1900 Hrs, in the Oak Lodge building. As always all members are welcome to attend, but we do need to know so we can make sure enough seats are available on the night.

Once again this year the AGM will conclude with a presentation, this years' will be by Neal Armour Chelu on the subject of Biodiversity.

We are also looking for 'new blood' to serve on the committee, so if you want to be considered, we will need your nomination.

### Corporate Sponsors

In the light of the current economic situation, we are extremely grateful to our Corporate Sponsors who have continued their support, and we would urge you to support them wherever you can.



The members making up your committee are:

- A. MASON (CHAIR)  
S. HUME (TREASURER / MEMBERSHIP)  
D. GOODRUM ( SECRETARY / NEWSLETTER & WEB)  
M. HUME T. SIMMONS  
J. SIMMONS A. SPIDY  
J. SHEW J. ENGLISH  
P. PARKER A. SWANN

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Or you can visit our website at [www.fotfp.org.uk](http://www.fotfp.org.uk)

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