



Friends of Thetford Forest Park

SPRING/SUMMER 2011 NEWSLETTER No. 51

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

Welcome to the latest issue of The Friends newsletter, and what a hectic couple of months we have had here in Thetford Forest – The nationwide campaign against the wholesale sell-off of the Public Forest Estate took over our lives and we achieved locally more publicity in the media than we could ever have hoped for initially, and of course the resulting U-Turn by the government proves that 'people-power' can and does make a difference.

It has also brought many Friends groups into contact with each other and gives us a good basis to continue the fight – see inside for further details on this.

Another good result, probably also linked to the campaign, is that we have had a surge in memberships and we now have over 1000 members on our database for the first time in our history – All we ask is that we can maintain this level, the campaign result proves the worth of being a member, whether on the sidelines or at the front with the banners & placards !!



Basil Edwards - Memorial Tree Planting - see over page.

TO THE FRIENDS OF THETFORD FOREST PARK

An expression of thanks, given at the planting of a tree in memory of Basil Edwards on January 26th 2011.

I feel proud to be standing here today, knowing that Basil would have been so pleased and honoured to have been paid such a delightful tribute.

He loved the forest and greatly enjoyed meeting the people and doing all he could in many ways, until old age and illness got in the way.

He was particularly fond of the Arboretum and would often say” Let's go to the Arboretum” and of course we would then make our way to the Hall for a little afternoon tea.

He could not have been given a more fitting memorial, and I would like to say a very big THANK YOU to all concerned for remembering Basil in this special way.

Well done everyone.

Elsie Edwards (Wife)

MILDENHALL WARREN LODGE OPEN DAY 15 MAY 2011

This year, we are holding an 'open day' with a difference as we are combining it with our annual conservation day at the site when we clear the building of encroaching vegetation and maintain the circular walk across the former warren. We will also be revealing a section of perimeter bank for the first time.

This is your opportunity to come inside the lodge, one of only two standing warren lodges in Breckland, out of twenty-six known lodge sites. There will be documents on display about its history and we will explain the work we are doing and why.

The Open Day is from 11am to 4pm on Sunday 15th May. The warren lodge is situated in Mildenhall Woods, on the minor road linking the A1065 and the A11 north of the Barton Mills Roundabout. From the A1065, the minor road is signed 'Household Waste Site, Elveden,' and from the A11 it is signed as 'Mildenhall.' Turn in to the signed car-parking area. The Lodge is about ten minutes walk up the hill. For further information please telephone 01760 755685 or the Forestry Commission's District Office on 01842 810271.

HOW THE FOREST WAS WON

A Chronology of How You Saved Thetford Forest

November '10

The Government announces in a letter to MPs its intention to radically reform the management of the Public Forest Estate by including it in the Public Bodies Reform Bill. It states its desire to move from “Big Government” to “Big Society”. Although the Government promises a public consultation, the announcement causes disquiet among forest user groups.

Friends immediately launch their campaign to “Save Thetford Forest!” and starts a media campaign.

December '10

Ministers announce plans to sell 40,000 hectares of forest.

Friends members are asked to write to their MPs and the Secretary of State for the Environment raising concerns over the proposed sales. It becomes clear that MPs begin to receive huge amounts of mail on the subject. Members are also encouraged to sign a national on-line petition. This petition ultimately secured over half a million signatures! Friends media campaign begins to have effect. Articles appear in local press highlighting fears over future of our forests.

January '11

The Public Consultation is launched. As feared, it includes no role for the Forestry Commission and is widely viewed as biased and completely out of step with the public's wishes.

Friend's launch the campaign web-site, detailing our concerns for the forest and our arguments for the retention of the Public Forest Estate.

Members are asked to keep the pressure on their MPs and to display posters and a car sticker. (This pressure really counted and played a significant part in the ultimate success of the campaign. Many of you asked for extra posters and car stickers - posters began to appear in many towns across the region and throughout the forest. Thank you!)

Friends lobbied members of the House of Lords to get the clauses concerning the Forestry Commission removed from the Public Bodies Reform Bill. Many Peers declared their support for our cause.

continues...

....continued

An Opposition Day Motion on the sale of the Public Forest Estate was debated in the Commons. Although defeated, it provided a great deal of publicity and raised the profile of the campaign even further. We encouraged our members to e-mail their MPs before the debate.

On the day of the Consultation announcement, Friends were in demand for press, radio and television interviews. Ms Anne Mason, Chair of Friends, took part in a national radio debate with Jim Paice, the Minister of State responsible for the Forestry Commission. Mr Paice, who had had a very low key campaign, was not heard of again after his public mauling.

In a very busy month, Friends were in constant demand, supplying quotes for both national and local media. Even French and Spanish television made enquiries! Letters from concerned individuals appeared in local newspapers on an almost daily basis. If you wrote to the press - thank you!

Friends also developed contacts with other groups fighting for the future of our forests. This included other Friends groups nationally and also local Ramblers organisations, horse riding groups and others.

Matthew Hancock, MP for West Suffolk, paid a visit to High Lodge. He was shown round by Friends committee members, who left him in no doubt as to the passion felt by many people for their forest.

February '11

A week after announcing the suspension of the sale of 15% of the Public Forest Estate - as permitted under current legislation - the Secretary of State announces the abandonment of the Public Consultation and the removal of the Forestry Commission from the Public Bodies Reform Bill. She also announces that a 'panel of experts' will report to her in the Autumn on the best way forward for the Public Forest Estate.

Well done to you all for your magnificent work in removing the immediate threat to our forests!

However, the future remains unclear. The sale of 15% of the Public Forest Estate will be back on the agenda. We need to make sure that the panel of

continues...

....continued

experts represents our views and not just those of vested interests. It is important to note that the long list of official recipients of the original public consultation did not include any Friends groups. Please keep an eye on our campaign web-site, which will continue until we are absolutely sure any threat to our forests is completely removed

The Committee of Friends of Thetford Forest Park would like to thank everyone for their wonderful support and commitment to our campaign to save Thetford Forest and the Public Forest Estate.

All the letters written by you to your MP, to Members of the House of Lords; to the Press and to Ministers were really powerful and impossible to ignore. Thank you so much.

This victory is ours but there is much still to campaign for.

We now need to ensure that our voice - the voice of Friends of Thetford Forest Park and of other community and voluntary groups - is heard on the Panel of Experts being set up by the Government to consider access and biodiversity in our publicly owned forests and woodlands.

This Panel must not consist only of 'vested interests'. (We noted that not one Friends' Group was included on the official circulation list of the now-abandoned consultation into the future of the Public Forest Estate).

Please continue to visit FOTFP website regularly as we need to be vigilant. The Government is still entitled to sell off 15% of the Public Forest Estate **each year** without recourse to Parliament.

If you have time, please write to your MPs to say 'thank you' for listening to the 'Will of the People' and remind them that the Public Forest Estate will continue to be vigorously defended by us all. Please also remind them that the Panel of Experts needs to include representatives of all user groups, including Friends', and not just 'vested interests'.

Finally, if you are not a member of FOTFP but have supported our campaign, then please join us !

PRIVATE OWNERSHIP!!

They say a picture says a 1000 words – These 3 pictures give an idea of what the campaign was about, and why we need to continue the fight to preserve access for all.

These particular signs are legal, permanent and local, and expect to see many more if the Forest is sold off.....



HELP US KEEP OUR FORESTS OUT OF PRIVATE OWNERSHIP

A LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Friends,

As Chair, I'd like to thank you all for your wonderful support for our campaign against the sell-off of the Public Forest Estate. On your behalf, I'd also like to acknowledge all the work done by the Committee who gave many hours of their time to help organise every aspect of our campaigning.

We still need to ensure that our forests remain in public ownership under the stewardship of the Forestry Commission but we have proved that 'the voice of the people' does have influence and that our forests are a much-treasured national asset.

Thank you, *Anne Mason – Chair*

FRIEND'S MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Membership numbers have increased during the Year March 2010 to February 2011 due, mainly, to the link with the High Lodge Visitor Centres Discovery Pass and the staff who have actively encouraged visitors to join whilst taking out a pass.

Memberships via the Discovery Pass were 976 Memberships and direct to Friends 56, this being an increase of 213 over the total from the previous year. In addition there are 6 Corporate and 7 Honorary Members.

When your membership becomes due you will receive a renewal notice, PLEASE RENEW, as in these uncertain times when the future of The Public Forest Estate is uncertain a strong membership is a good starting point.

The Membership fee remains at £9.00 per household and with a discovery pass there is no additional cost, The Forestry Commission reimburse Friends.

Sheila Hume (Membership Secretary)

If you have queries about your membership, please contact me on 01953457520 or sheilahume70@btinternet.com

CONSERVATION GROUP

The conservation group has had a very busy last few months, which culminated in the launching of three tern rafts built from scratch by the group onto the wildlife lake at Lynford. It is hoped that these will encourage terns to nest on them in the near future.

The group meets every third Sunday in the month, and the work carried out varies depending on the time of the year, but is becoming ever more important with the inevitable cuts to FC's budget which means they have less resources to carry out this sort of work with their own staff, so if you want to help in a practical way, why not come along and join us – We don't bite and always have managed to end the morning with a smile on our faces and a real sense of achievement.



FEBRUARY:
One of the Three
'Tern Rafts'
being launched
onto Lynford Water.



CONSERVATION DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

	2011	2012
January	Weed moss and privet at Rex Graham Reserve	Weed moss and privet at Rex Graham Reserve
February	Launch tern rafts at Lynford Water (joint volunteer day with the Arboretum Group)	Lynford Ash Fen
March	Goshawk trail maintenance	Rex Graham Reserve – Boardwalk and Handrail replacement
April	Rex Graham Reserve Temporary repairs to steps and handrails etc thinning of trees and more privet removal prior to open day	Goshawk trail maintenance
May	Mildenhall Warren Lodge maintenance and open day and New Mugwort Pit	Didlington Ice House Scrub bash (birds permitting)
June	Bat Box making	Santon Street Sand Pits
July	Rex Graham reserve maintenance. Weeding out Willowherb & Hogweed	Rex Graham reserve maintenance. Weeding out Willowherb & Hogweed
August	Grassland seeding for Dingy Skipper	Mildenhall Warren Lodge maintenance and New Mugwort Pit
September	Hills and Holes weed ponds	Hills and Holes weed ponds
October	Santon Street Scrub Bash	Santon Street Scrub Bash
November	Croxton or Hockham (Frosts Common) Great Crested Newt pond clearance	Croxton or Hockham (Frosts Common) Great Crested Newt pond clearance
December	Event – make something at High Lodge	Event – make something at High Lodge

LYNFORD

The past six months has seen some major changes with the addition of somewhere to rest at approximately one hundred metre intervals around the all ability paths. Attached to four of the new benches are interpretation panels.

August saw the down loading of temperature data from five sensors located throughout the arboretum. These were set to record the temperature every fifteen minutes, day and night, for a whole year. The resulting information showed a marked lower temperature difference between the upper section of the arboretum and down towards the lakes. Having been reset, the sensors were returned to their original locations and a further three were added to give a better coverage

Still on a science theme; some preliminary findings from the Cambridge PhD student, reported on in the last edition, regarding the affect on trees of drought. Clear evidence of the low rainfalls in 1976 and again in 1992 is apparent in the growth pattern of each of the twenty-two subject trees. The full report will be available later this year.

Late autumn saw the largest shrub planting for a number of years. Again the emphasis has been on resin bearing plants that will give winter colour which, given a season or two to establish, should see a mellowing of the sombre greens of the conifers in the duller months of the year. A number of smaller ornamental trees were also added, again to bring autumn and spring colour. As with the shrubs, time and patience should be rewarded.

Throughout the winter, weather permitting, much effort was given over to the care of existing trees and shrubs. Branches over sailing paths were lightened allowing them to spring up, thereby increasing headroom and, in some instances, visibility.

Overgrown shrubs were looked to in an attempt to reinvigorate them and improve their appearance. If, in the fullness of time, this fails to come about, we will wish them good luck as we wave them goodbye; as Gracie Fields would say.

Dog-walking facilities are being improved with a way marked series of paths in the southeast extension. This is an area abounding with new smells guaranteed to delight; however would our canine visitors please keep their owners out of the marked wildlife areas.

LYNFORD DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Arboretum Group Mornings

March 2011: Sunday 6th
Sunday 13th
Wednesday 16th
Wednesday 23th

April 2011: Sunday 3rd
Sunday 10th
Wednesday 20th
Wednesday 27th

May 2011: Sunday 1st
Sunday 8th
Wednesday 18th
Wednesday 25th
Sunday 29th

June 2011: Sunday 5th
Sunday 12th
Wednesday 15th
Wednesday 22nd

July 2011: Sunday 3rd
Sunday 10th
Wednesday 20th
Sunday 24th
Wednesday 27th

August 2011: Sunday 7th
Sunday 14th
Wednesday 17th
Wednesday 24th

September 2011: Sunday 4th
Wednesday 7th
Sunday 11th
Wednesday

Special Event Dates

May – Sundays 1st and 29th
“Walk in the Woods Month”
A chance to look at trees from
around the world.
Free Events, from 10:30 for
approximately two hours.

July – Sunday 24th “Arboretum
Open Day”
Free Event, from 10:00 to
16:00.

July – Friday 29th “Moth Survey
Evening”
Free Event, 21:00 until late
(Bring BUG cream!)

August – Friday 26th “Moth
Survey Evening”
Free Event, 21:00 until late
(Bring BUG cream!)

Events later in the year –
October, “UN Year of Forests”.

December, “Tree Dressing”
(children's event)

Details and times of both events
in next edition of Friends
Newsletter.

Our corporate sponsors



Friends of
Thetford Forest Park

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. ENGLISH

P. PARKER A. SWANN

To Contact any of us:

info@fotfp.org.uk or 01953 601105 Dave Goodrum

Or you can visit our website at www.fotfp.org.uk

produced by



SPC Printers Ltd

Unit 12 Audley Court
Thetford Norfolk IP24 1HT

Tel: 01842 775002

Fax: 01842 775005

email: sales@spcprinters.co.uk