



Friends of Thetford Forest

AUTUMN/WINTER 2016 NEWSLETTER No. 62

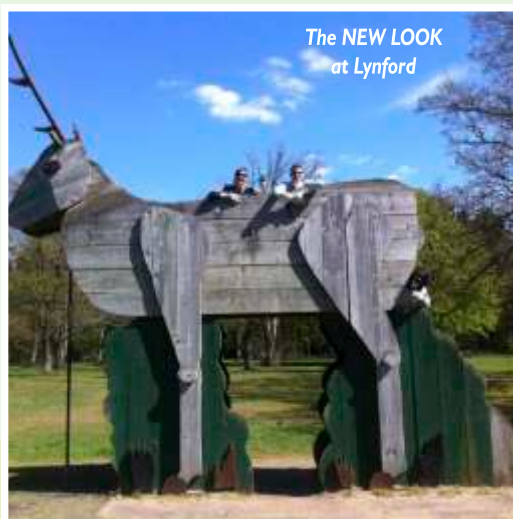
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Welcome to the latest issue of our newsletter, which we hope you find both enjoyable and interesting. Once again visitor numbers throughout the forest have increased this year, and the extra attractions at High Lodge Centre have been well used, and the quieter Lynford Arboretum site, cared for by FoTF has been equally appreciated by all those who have visited it.

If you have not been to the Arboretum, it is well worth a visit as it's fascinating place (access details are on the FOTF website) and there is plenty of information all the way around the trails to help you understand why it's there.

Our volunteering activities have seen an increase in participation and it's gratifying to see so many people wanting to participate and help make a difference; There are many opportunities available - details are on our website, or you can simply email any questions to us at: volunteering@fotf.org.uk

LYNFORD STAG GETS A MAKEOVER



People driving along the A134 between Thetford and Mundford on Wednesday 4th May might have noticed work going on at the Lynford Stag Picnic Site. Volunteers from an administrative office in Cambridge had offered to help refurbish the site and were working jointly with the Forestry Commission and Friends of Thetford Forest.

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The large wooden play stag and metal target stag (which was once owned by the Lynford Estate) are well known features to drivers along the road and visitors to Thetford Forest. In warm Spring sunshine, the volunteers cleaned, sanded down and painted the two stags, giving them a new lease of life. The picnic tables were also cleaned and painted ready for the busy summer season



Afterwards, the volunteers drove the short distance to Lynford Arboretum where FOTF members Owen and Carol Moore explained the work that FOTF volunteers do to care for it. The collection of trees and the carpet of bluebells impressed them all and several said that they'd like to return when they had more time.

Victoria Tustian, Thetford Forest's Recreation and Community Manager said “The volunteer team gave a real injection of energy into this popular picnic site and have made it feel very smart and welcoming. We'd like to say a big thank you to everyone who took part and to the FOTF for creating this fantastic opportunity to work together.”

PUBLIC FOREST CAMPAIGN REPORT

Without doubt, the big political news of the summer has been the decision of the UK to leave the European Union. The immediate consequence for FoTF has been the arrival of both a new Secretary of State for the Environment and a new Forestry Minister. Thetford Forest MP Liz Truss moves on to the Ministry of Justice and is replaced by Andrea Leadsom as Environment Secretary.

Ms Leadsom's previous appointment was in the Department of Energy and Climate Change. Rory Stewart becomes the Minister at the Department for International Development. He is replaced by Suffolk Coastal MP Dr. Therese Coffey.

FOTF has wasted no time inviting Dr Coffey to visit Thetford Forest and see at first hand the incredible work that is done on the Public Forest Estate (PFE) for wildlife, public access and archaeology while at the same time supporting the timber industry. We have sought assurances that she will honour the pledges made to us by Ms Truss and Mr Stewart in person less than a year ago to protect the PFE for the nation (see Spring/Summer '16 Newsletter) and that this legislative protection will be in place within the lifetime of this Government.

While the terms of the UK's exit from the EU remain uncertain, it is interesting to note that the new Chancellor of the Exchequer Philip Hammond recently pledged to maintain the system of Farm Subsidy payments that the EU makes to private landholders. With the fabled £350 million per week saved by leaving the EU already promised by exit campaigners on health, education and defence, where will this money will come from and how it will affect DEFRA's already strained budget?

Will the burden fall upon our publicly-owned woods and forests?

We urge Mr Hammond to make available the relatively minor sum of £22 million per year recommended by the IPF (Independent Panel on Forestry) to ensure that the PFE continues to deliver the huge benefits for health and well-being and the environment so that it can sustain these.

Earlier in the summer, FoTF hosted the latest of our fact-finding tours for DEFRA officials. Stephen Penlington and Colin Whelan were able to see the conservation work of our volunteers and the recently restored medieval Mildenhall Warren Lodge before heading off to see forest operations in action



During the course of the day they also learned about FC's work with community forests in Thames Chase and were shown Thetford's award-winning research into the tree species that might be better adapted for growth in Thetford Forest in an era of climate change. FoTF regards these visits as vital to developing an awareness and understanding among key policy makers of the importance of our woods and forests and how they deliver so many benefits for so many people.

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As we enter a period of uncertainty FoTF remains committed to ensuring that promises made will be delivered and that the nation's publicly-owned forests will be safeguarded for us all to enjoy in perpetuity.

SEVENTEEN FOTF MEMBERS GAVE 120 HOURS TO HELP AT THE FOREST CONCERTS 30 JUNE - 3 JULY

For several years now FOTF members have volunteered at the summer concerts at High Lodge, organising the parking of cars for those with mobility restrictions and helping with access to the arena and then back to the Badger Car Park after the performance. In a new initiative for 2016, FOTF was also present in the arena itself, in the 'Meet and Greet' Marquee, giving out information and generally promoting the Forestry Commission and Friends'.

Imogen Radford was one of the marquee volunteers and has written about her experience on one of the four nights that the concerts were held.

Manning the information stall for the Forest Live concerts run by FC is a great opportunity to give information on Thetford Forest to concert-goers, many of whom might not have been to the forest before but might come again. This was what several who came over to the stall on Saturday night said: they loved it, and were interested in coming back with kids and grandchildren to go on the play equipment, or coming back to go cycling or walking, or just enjoy the peace and quiet.



Happy Visitors at one of the famous concert evenings

On the Saturday we did not get huge numbers coming over to the stall and fortunately no lost people needing our help, but it was a good chance for people to see we were there, and also to see the big FC signs. Many passed on their way to the bar and back, and glanced at the displays even if they did not stop.



The concert itself was a treat - great support band and the main act really got the crowd dancing and singing along. It was very well organised and ran smoothly. Putting on a free meal for the volunteers and staff went down very well, and showcased the excellent catering - again to people who might not have been there before. The evening was enjoyable for volunteers on the information stall too.

*Information stall volunteers,
Imogen Radford and Alan Spidy were at
Paul Heaton & Jacqui Abbott concert,
2 July 2016,*

MOTHS AT HIGH LODGE EVENT

It was a warm evening in late August. Light was fading and a storm approached. The last of the thousands of day-time visitors to High Lodge had left and only a few Friends members remained among the now deserted pines.

Tim and Theresa Frost, together with Steven MacAvoy of the BTO, had set their light traps and awaited the arrival of hundreds of specimens for the Friends' Moth Evening.

They had set up the traps in four locations and so we were able to see at first hand (literally, as the moths rested on palms and fingers) this fascinating night-time world as well as receiving expert guidance in identification of the various amazing species.

A wonderfully named and hugely diverse population of moths were drawn to the lights. Poplar hawkmoth, white plume, common footman and many, many others including of course, the forester.



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The sheer number of species and individuals was overwhelming and underlined not only the incredible biodiversity of a part of the forest heavily visited by people but also the importance of moths as prey species for other wildlife such as bats and nightjar.



FOTF Events in 2016

Since the last newsletter in March, Friends of Thetford Forest has been very active in its support for the Forestry Commission and in helping everyone access and enjoy the Forest.

For Discovery Day on 20 March, FOTF led on publicity for the event and organised the displays and activities in the two marquees, showcasing the timber production, wildlife, and archaeology of Thetford Forest. It was fantastic to have a forwarder and harvester on site, with the Forest Operations Team demonstrating what these machines could do. Wildlife Rangers joined us to talk about deer management and explain to the public how to identify the deer they see in the Forest.

Sunday 29 May was the joint open day at Mildenhall Warren Lodge and the Rex Graham Military Orchid Reserve, notable for having four new members join at the lodge. Two weeks later, FOTF members and Forestry Commission Staff visited the Enterprise Building at the University of East Anglia, Britain's greenest building and one of the most sustainable buildings in Europe, with Passivhaus and BREEAM Outstanding Building Accreditation. Especially significant for us is that its timber frame is of Corsican Pine from Thetford Forest.

The first weekend in July saw seventeen FOTF volunteers helping at the concerts, both with car parking for the disabled and in the Information Marquee in the arena. High Lodge is transformed for these concerts, with ten thousand people enjoying themselves on a summer's evening, as Imogen Radford explained in her article elsewhere in this issue.

Seven FOTF members helped at the High Lodge Open Day on 21 July and then thirty attended the heritage walk at Lynford Arboretum on 3 August.

This was led by David Robertson, Historic Environment Officer (Countryside), Norfolk County Council and by Committee Member Bob Greef, retired lecturer in Garden History and Countryside Management.

They have both made special studies of the landscape history of the Lynford Estate and enthralled us by revealing the hidden remains of bridges, Japanese garden features and sunken paths and ponds. Special thanks are also due to Owen and Carol Moore who organised wine, coffee, biscuits and cake at the Friends' Lodge after the walk and gave us all the opportunity to enjoy the warm evening and to talk to each other as dusk fell.

With so many events happening, it is a wonderful testament to the strength of volunteering that the conservation work has continued one Sunday a month; that Lynford Arboretum has been cared for as diligently as ever, that the walking trails are regularly checked and the 'Meet and Greet' role carried out at High Lodge. We are still campaigning and lobbying for the safeguarding of our Public Forest Estate, as described by Alan Spidy in his report.

FOTF also took part in the Charles Burrell Centre Open Day in Thetford on Sunday 4th September. Friends joined a number of other local community groups in running a stall in the old school hall as part of Thetford's Great Festival.

We took the opportunity to talk to people about Mildenhall Warren Lodge, Lynford Arboretum, the ongoing campaigning work, and many other topics. It was great to be able to tell local people about the work which Friends does, and the volunteering opportunities available, in the forest on our doorstep.

The Committee is already planning for 2017 so please let us know if there are any particular events or visits you would like us to arrange and don't hesitate to contact us if you would like to volunteer. As Chair, I'm incredibly proud of all that FOTF achieves and the support we have from our members so 'thank you' to you all.

'TRAILING THE HIDDEN HERITAGE OF HIGH LODGE'

The one-year Development Phase of the 'Trailing the Hidden Heritage of High Lodge' Project has about three months to go, with submission of the Round Two Application to the Heritage Lottery Fund at the end of November, for a decision in March 2017.

Surveys showed that the most support is for projects which investigate archaeology and help discover more about the wildlife of High Lodge so these will be the focus of workshops and day schools and include training in the required skills.

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If you would like to know more about the project and become involved in developing it as described here, please email

highlodgefeedback@forestry.gsi.gov.uk



The Development Phase has enabled the Project Team to ask visitors to High Lodge; on the website and at consultation events, to give their views on the route, length and surfacing of the all-ability trail which will take people into the Forest and give them information about the ten thousand years of landscape history hidden beneath the trees.



The consultations have helped the Forestry Commission to understand and provide for the needs of all its 'audiences' and to look at training and learning opportunities and how the project can provide a range of activities to help everyone enjoy, learn about and participate in the heritage of High Lodge.



Submission of the Round 2 Application is by the end of November but the decision from the Heritage Lottery Fund won't be known until Spring 2017.

THE CONSERVATION GROUP

The long running conservation group has continued with its various tasks this year, some return visits to previous sites and some to new sites with new challenges.

We were pleased to see over the last year has seen an increase in numbers attending and helping us, and pictures taken during the day are posted on our website and on Facebook and some are tweeted for all to see.

Our latest visit was to Hockham where we removed a considerable amount of gorse that had grown up thanks to the wet and warm weather this season.

FOTF HAD A SPECIAL INVITATION TO TOUR THE ENTERPRISE BUILDING AT UEA ON FRIDAY 10 JUNE



Opened in June 2015, the Enterprise Centre is the University of East of Anglia's (UEA) newest, Britain's greenest and one of the most sustainable buildings in Europe. Of particular interest to us is that the timber frame structure was manufactured using Corsican Pine timber sourced locally from Thetford Forest, the first time that Corsican Pine has ever been used as a building material.



Both the interior exterior were constructed of the same timber and a very good looking and environmentally kind building is the result as you can see from these pictures during the tour.



Friends of Thetford Forest

Your current Committee

Anne Mason
Chair/ PFE
Campaign

Alan Spidy
Vice Chair / PFE
Campaign

Dave Goodrum Secretary
/newsletter + www /
Conservation

Katherine Jones
Volunteering Co-ordinator

Owen Moore
Lynford Aboretum

Benedict Maher

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