



Friends of Thetford Forest

VOLUNTEERS
SPECIAL EDITION

AUTUMN/WINTER 2017 NEWSLETTER No. 64

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A warm welcome to our latest issue of the Friends newsletter – It's fair to say that we have had a very good year as you will see inside. None of this would be possible without the continuing support of you, our members and volunteers. A large part of this newsletter is dedicated to volunteer participation, but we felt this was only appropriate under the circumstances

However, as you will know from our history with the Forest Campaign, we do not sit back on our laurels and the mere fact that we can display this logo will I hope to encourage more of you to actively participate in some of the many opportunities we have available. Further information from info@fotf.org.uk



**The Queen's Award
for Voluntary Service**

The MBE for volunteer groups



You will find inside many comments from our volunteers on just why the help us and what they get out of it – so why not give it a try?



You can now follow us on Twitter

[@fotf_uk](https://twitter.com/fotf_uk)

NOT ONE BUT TWO AWARDS THIS YEAR!

2017 has surely been the best year ever for Friends of Thetford Forest, with our highest membership and two awards. We have, at the time of writing, 1779 members; 1698 joined through the Discovery Pass offer and 81 directly.

One of our awards is from the Royal Forestry Society, in recognition of our work at Lynford Arboretum. The RFS is the largest and longest established education charity promoting the sustainable management of woods in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Terry Jennings, FC Establishment Manager, nominated Friends' volunteers at the Arboretum for the award as it had to be site-specific.

Two RFS judges visited the Arboretum with Terry Jennings and FOTF Chair Anne Mason to learn about how it is cared for by the dedicated volunteers. They awarded Lynford Arboretum joint second in the Urban and Community Forestry Awards Category.

The Citation was especially pleasing:

Lynford Arboretum is probably the most unusual community woodland ever visited by the judges – and it is truly delightful. Originally established by the owners of nearby Lynford Hall in the 1860's it was taken over by the Forestry Commission in the 1950's who added many more tree species to the collection. However, by the 1990's budget cuts moved the arboretum down the list of priorities and the site was suffering from reduced maintenance.

In 2007 the Friends of Thetford Forest took over the management and this was clearly the best thing to happen to it as it is now the third most important arboretum in England as well as having Grade 1 Listed Parkland status. Located in what, at first, appears to be a remote part of Thetford Forest, it soon becomes apparent that it enjoys a phenomenal level of use in no small way entirely attributable to the efforts of the Friends. Since taking over in 2007 the Friends with full support from the FC have developed walking trails, car parking facilities, created wildflower meadows and shrub layers, improved signage and literature, created a small visitor centre and, perhaps most unusual of all – created a dog agility trail in association with the Kennel Club. Regular work parties take place and the site is regularly used as a training ground for students, apprentices and disadvantaged groups.

The Friends are active throughout the forest and have over 1300 paid-up members, run numerous events and have a philosophy that promotes 'enjoyment and understanding'. They are efficiently run, effective in their aims and have good governance which will guarantee a secure future. This is an outstanding success story brought about by an equally outstanding organisation which works closely with the Forestry Commission in a mutually beneficial manner. Both organisations have the utmost respect for each other. We would recommend that all similar organisations with similar aspirations take time to see how effectively the Friends of Thetford Forest operates.

ANOTHER AWARD!

The second award was announced on 2 June: The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service which is the equivalent of an MBE and the highest award a volunteer group can achieve.

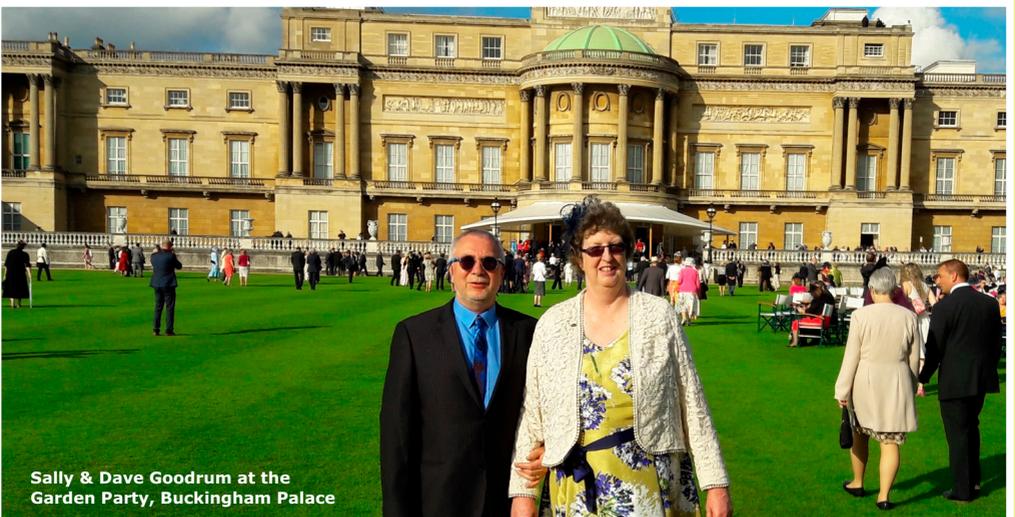
It included an invitation to a Royal Garden Party so Dave and Sally Goodrum went to Buckingham Palace; the right to use the QAVS logo for 'evermore' and an English Crystal with the insignia logo, as well as a certificate signed by Her Majesty the Queen. The Countess of Euston, as the Lord-Lieutenant of Suffolk and therefore the Queen's representative in the county, presented us with the certificate and crystal at a ceremony at Oak Lodge on 11 October 2017, attended by members of the Committee, volunteers and those FC staff who work most closely with us. We're very grateful to Vicky Tustian for nominating us.

The letter announcing our success stated:

I am writing to inform you that Friends of Thetford Forest (FoTF) was nominated for The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service 2017. This award was created by The Queen in 2002 to mark the occasion of her Golden Jubilee, recognising excellence in voluntary activities carried out by groups in the community. It is the MBE for volunteer groups.

The work your group does for the community was very much admired by the independent Assessment Committee, chaired by Sir Martyn Lewis CBE and I am delighted to inform you that your group has been selected as a recipient for The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service (QAVS) 2017.

The award of The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service 2017 represents a tremendous achievement for your organisation. We hope that everyone involved, and particularly your volunteers, feel immensely proud of the recognition that this Award represents.





Her Majesty the Queen greeting guests



The Lord Lieutenant of Suffolk, The Countess of Euston, with Anne Mason and Morag Truscott at the presentation of the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service

Proud FOTF members: Owen Moore, Alan Spidy, Anne Mason, Morag Truscott, Katherine Jones and Benedict Mayer.



Both awards are a reflection of the commitment and enthusiasm of our volunteers and their generosity in giving so many hours of their time to the Forest. Those volunteers who have served on the Committee over the years deserve a special mention as it is their dedication which has enabled Friends to thrive, supported by the wonderful partnership with the Forestry Commission.

So – there is much to celebrate and to build on as we plan for the future.

LYNFORD ARBORETUM NEWS

On 7 May, Forestry Commission Staff, Friends of Thetford Forest members and invited guests gathered to celebrate the work of the volunteers, both past and present, at the Arboretum. FOTF took on the day-to-day care of the tree collection in 2007 and usually work there on Wednesday and Sunday mornings.

During the afternoon of 7 May, some of the volunteers led guided walks to explain the work they do and what they have achieved. Everyone then gathered for a delicious tea, provided by Churchill Catering, with Owen and Carol Moore cutting the birthday cake.

Anne Mason thanked the volunteers for their dedicated work spanning ten years. Jim Lyon, attending his last FOTF event before his retirement as Forest Management Director, spoke about how the Arboretum has been transformed by the care and attention lavished on it by the volunteers. It was altogether a happy and celebratory occasion and resulted in five new volunteers keen to be involved in the Friends' work.



MORE LYNFORD ARBORETUM NEWS

FOTF is very fortunate to have the involvement of Chris Reynolds to advise on tree identification and management.

Chris was formerly the Curator at Bedgebury Pinetum in Kent and now works as a Woodland Officer for FC, helping owners improve the condition of their woodlands and overseeing grants and felling licences.

He has spent two days with the volunteers at the Arboretum, helping them to identify and learn about the tree species and advocating 'best practice' management. His recommendations will be incorporated in the Management Plan, currently being drafted.

In addition, Chris was joined by Richard Jinks so that they could work together to update the database and check the trees listed on it with those actually growing in the ground. Richard Jinks is the Commission's leading expert on research into species and resilient forests and tree regeneration. He is the scientific and technical advisor to Westonbirt National Arboretum and Bedgebury Pinetum and the Arboretum will benefit from his incredible knowledge as well as from the guidance being provided by Chris Reynolds.

FOTF is very grateful to the Forestry Commission for giving Chris the time to spend at the Arboretum and supporting his work with us.

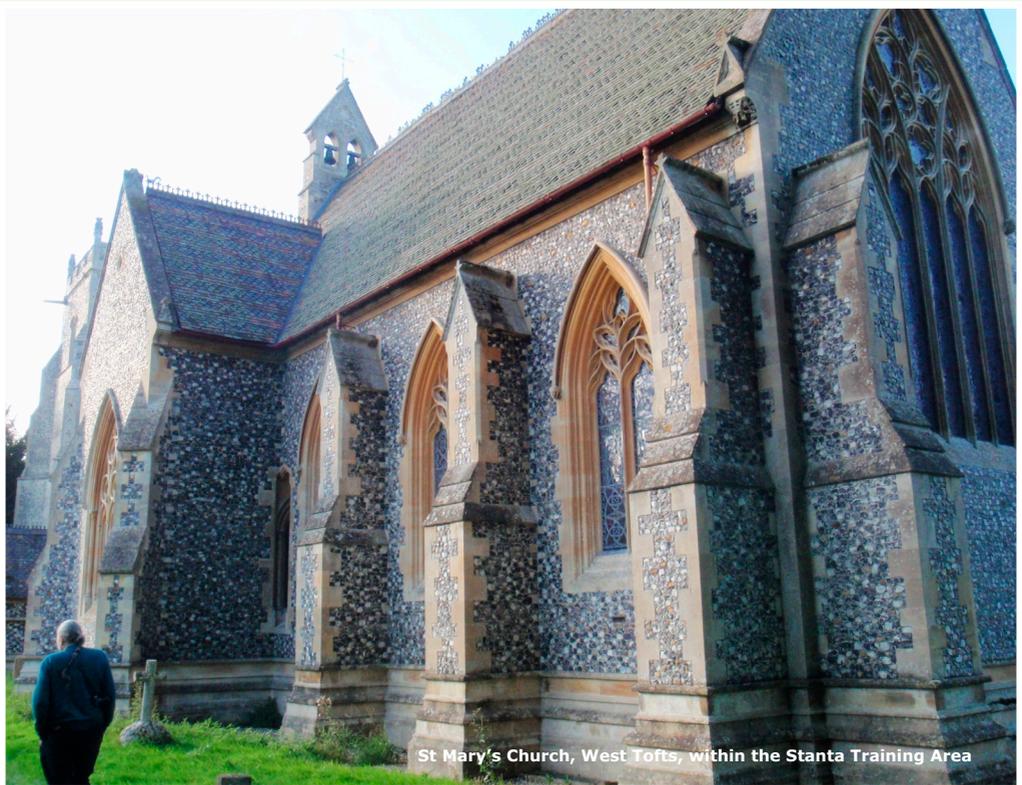
OUR VISIT TO STANTA

A Chance for us to give back to our volunteers.

On Tuesday 12 September 2017 we joined a group of FOTF volunteers for a visit to the STANTA battleground.

We travelled by coach from Santon Downham, and met our “guide”, Sergeant Major John Boisson at the Stanford Training Area. John knew the area very well, having himself trained troops there prior to them being deployed to war zones around the world, and as a result he was very enthusiastic and knowledgeable.

The first place we were taken was St Mary Church at West Tofts; a church which had been restored by Pugin (the artist and architect responsible for many of the gothic-style public buildings in the Victoria era, including the Palace of Westminster). What was remarkable was that the ornate decoration, including a huge stained-glass window, was all intact and well kept. This church is no longer open to the general public but it is still in use as a consecrated church; mainly for christenings, weddings and, occasionally funerals. Previous occupants of West Tofts can request a service there, otherwise it is mostly used by the military.



St Mary's Church, West Tofts, within the Stanta Training Area



We then travelled further into the battle area, to be shown the areas where troops train including the live firing areas, some of which are still littered with live munitions from WWII training exercises.

There are some “villages” within the battle area built by the military and designed to replicate areas that troops might be sent to, to provide realistic training. There were some troops there during our visit, although you had to look hard to see the ones in camouflage!

Overall it was a very interesting visit, and it will certainly make us look at the signs for “battle area” in a different way next time we are travelling around the Brecks. What was most gratifying was to see that the military were looking after the flora and fauna as a significant part of their work there, including sheep which leaves most of the battle area looking as the Brecks used to before the modern forest was planted.

Sharon Nash and Sue Colledge
Enthusiastic FOTF Volunteers!

SOME COMMENTS FROM A FEW OF OUR MANY VOLUNTEERS WHO KINDLY GIVE THE TIME AND EFFORT TO SUPPORT FOTF

When we started the conservation group in 2000, I had no idea how it would blossom and how many different people I would meet and work with. Still a wonderful way to spend a Sunday morning and I look forward to seeing many more of you in the future.

Dave Goodrum , Co-ordinator

We have had the pleasure of inspecting the Fir Trail on a monthly basis for the past 2 years.

The walking trail is approximately 3 miles in length. We advise the staff at High Lodge by reporting our findings after each inspection. Trail marker posts are checked out at each stage of the trail to ensure they are in good condition. We also collect litter left on the trail by some visitors, and often remove any small branches which are obscuring the path.

The recent installation of benches and stools positioned along the trail are much appreciated and used extensively.

Allan & Lynn Brewster

I've been coming to Thetford Forest for as long as I can remember. Cycling, walking the dogs & family days out with the kids at High Lodge. My middle lad is at college on a wildlife management course & we were looking for some hands-on experience as well as looking to give something back. As someone who works in an office it is just wonderful to get stuck in with FoTF in the great outdoors. Just something really nice about being in among the trees working with a lovely bunch of like-minded people. Fresh air, exercise, tea, biscuits, cake & good company

Darren Barnes Conservation.

One of the reasons I volunteer for the Friends at the Live music concerts is to provide valuable resources to the Forestry Commission.

As volunteers many of the event guests feel able to approach us and the feedback we receive from them is very rewarding knowing they have enjoyed there evening.

We get to meet some very interesting and amazing people and we are proud to be the face of the Friends of Thetford Forest.

Ruth Carter

continues



*Becky, Bill, Paul, Peter Colin, Darren, David, Tom
PLUS Alan who was behind the camera showing it's
not all arduous work on a Conservation day.*



My name is James, I volunteer at the Forest Discovery Day each Spring to provide some creative art materials which help children look at and engage with the natural environment of the woods, heaths and forest.

Nature is important for learning and the forest is a wonderful environment, to explore, ever changing with the seasons. It hides a myriad of discoveries, from birds in the trees and minibeasts in the leaf litter, to the forgotten histories people who once lived on the land and mined underground before the trees were planted.

Through free play children shall learn to love the forest, and to become the next generation of resilient champions for history, conservation, and trees.

James Cross Discovery Day

I started to volunteer with the Friends of Thetford Forest as a way of getting out and about after moving to the area. I soon discovered that as well as being able to see the forest change throughout the year, I also got to meet a very diverse group of people.

It is very rewarding to see people going on the trails and being able to enjoy them as they should, knowing that I have contributed towards it.

Becky Hawes Forest Walking Trails

Who wouldn't want to volunteer at Lynford Arboretum after four and half years we still find it one of the most beautiful places in the world to be.

We held a Tea Party in May to mark our 10th anniversary but the icing on the cake for all the Lynford volunteers was our Silver award from the Royal Forestry Society Excellence in Forestry Awards 2017.



Owen and I collected the award on behalf of the Forestry Commission and the Volunteers it was an amazing day that I will always remember. Carol and Owen Lynford Arboretum.

TRAILING THE HIDDEN HERITAGE OF HIGH LODGE PROJECT

The official launch of the project, which has also received funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, took place at the High Lodge Open Day on 27 July 2017.

Invited guests, including HLF Committee Member Joff Whitten and Forest Management Director Tristram Hilborn, gathered at Oak Lodge for the unveiling of the HLF plaque. They then toured the field to view the demonstrations connected with the heritage –the East Norfolk Militia with their flintlock muskets; Cliff Maidstone showing how ferrets were used by the warreners to catch rabbits; Claire Bradshaw from the Norfolk Historic Environment Service with a collection of archaeological finds and Suffolk Archaeology CIC with surveying equipment.

Friends of Thetford Forest 'Meet and Greet' volunteers talked to visitors about the project and the opportunities for everyone to explore and research the history of the landscape; take part in archaeological surveys and investigations; carry out wildlife surveys; help produce activities for schools and families and contribute to interpretation. They explained that participants will receive training and learn new heritage skills and that there is no charge for any of the activities.



The launch of the project, 27 July 2017

A list of all the activities is available on the High Lodge webpages

<https://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/bee-h-aphf3>

To book a place for any of these activities, please email:

highlodgefeedback@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

You can also telephone **0300 067 4556** or write to:

The Project Manager, High Lodge Heritage Project, Forest District Office, Santon Downham, Brandon, Suffolk IP27 0TJ.

FOREST CAMPAIGN REPORT

What's happening with plans to protect the Public Forest Estate (PFE) for the Nation? Well, as Bjork might say, 'it's all so quiet'. The Scottish independence and Brexit referenda, not to mention a snap general election, have all pushed the issue further and further down the political agenda.

With the impending arrival of a number of initiatives such as the Environment 25 Year Plan, the collective minds of the forestry sector are now on other things. Not least, how to sustain the current level of public subsidies for private woodlands when the UK leaves the EU.

In October, Friends attended an event on the future of UK forestry. We heard reaffirmation of commitments to increase the level of tree cover in England to 12% and to plant 11 million trees.

Delegates were asked what they saw as the major challenges and opportunities ahead but the most noticeable thing from our point of view was how little the PFE featured in most organisations' thinking. However, it is the PFE that underpins commercial forestry in this country and provides huge opportunities for conservation and public access.

This is why it is so important for small community groups such as Friends to continue to take every opportunity to press the case for PFE protection.

We haven't forgotten the perils that our publicly-owned forests faced back in 2010 and continue to call for the Government to honour the recommendations of the Independent Panel on Forestry's report in 2012 to hold the PFE in trust for the Nation.

We have invited the Environment Secretary Michael Gove and the Forestry Minister Dr Therese Coffey to visit Thetford Forest and see for themselves the huge benefits that it brings to local people and the economy.



You can now follow us on Twitter

 [@fotf_uk](https://twitter.com/fotf_uk)

2017 FoTF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 2017 AGM at Oak Lodge was attended by 26 members and 4 Forestry Commission staff.

(Apologies were received from 19 members and 4 FC)

There were reports by the Treasurer/Membership Secretary, the Secretary and the Chair.

The following were re-elected as your Committee for 2017 -18:

Dave Goodrum; Alan Spidy; Katherine Jones; Owen Moore; Benedict Mayer; and Anne Mason; and Bob Greef re-joined us after a year's sabbatical.

After coffee and cake (with our thanks to Churchill Catering) Mike Toms, Associate Director, British Trust for Ornithology, gave a fascinating and highly informative presentation about the bird species of Thetford Forest and the research being carried out by the BTO into their numbers and distribution.



Tawny Owl chick

The Forestry Commission has asked us if we would like to help revamp the nature trail at High Lodge and the Goshawk Trail at Mayday so the new committee will be considering these requests.

If you, our members, have ideas for projects that will benefit the Forest and visitors to it, please email us at info@fotf.org.uk

We can't promise to undertake them all, but we will certainly discuss them at our future meetings.

FOREST DESIGN PLANS

Emma Rawlinson is the Forestry Commission's Forest Planner for the East District. She writes the Forest Design Plans which set out the management proposals for the next thirty years for each block or blocks of forest.

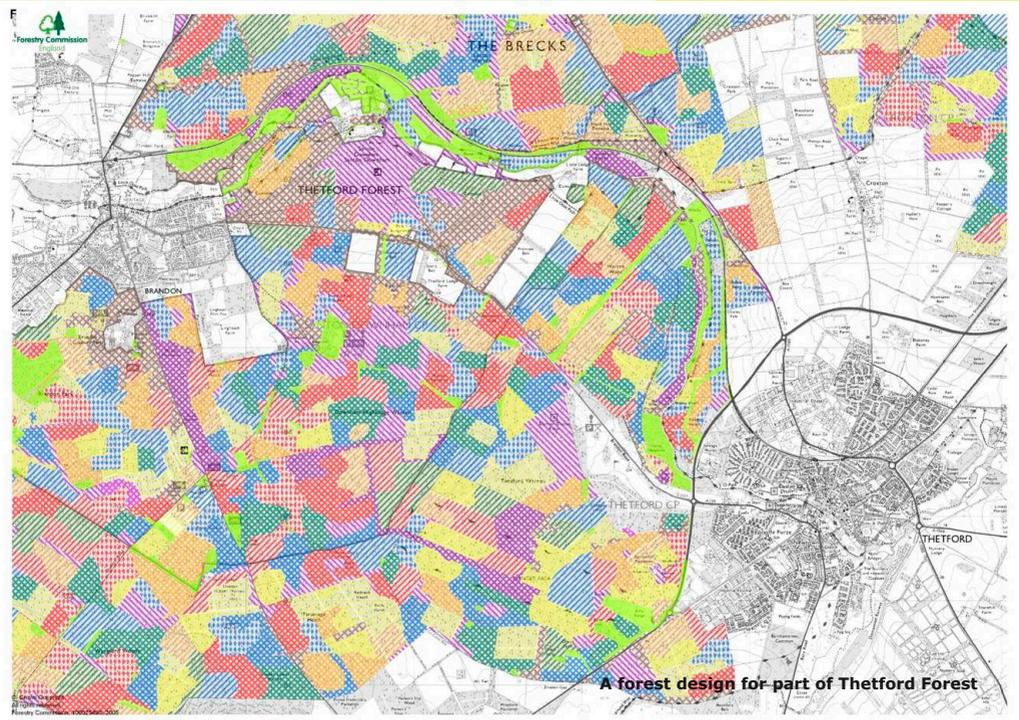
Emma has kindly explained the process for us:

All public forests have a forest plan which is revised every 10 years and reviewed every 5 years. All forest plans are subject to a public consultation at the 10-year revision. These plans show long term broad brush proposals for a specified area and seek to balance the needs of nature and people without compromising sustainable timber production. More detailed plans of operations within an area are drawn up before work begins using an operational site assessment.

At this time surveys of wildlife, archaeology, timber volume and public use are carried out, and based on results the forest plan may be refined, and minor changes made. Forest plans and current public consultations can be accessed online at:

<https://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/INFD-9PFDDY>

Information on the location of active forest operations can also be viewed from this page.



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

Bob Greef

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