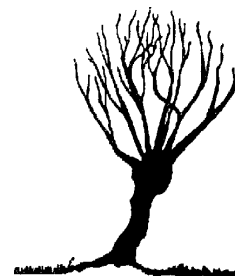


# The Friends of Epping Forest Newsletter



March 2001

## Dear Friend,

The very wet winter has given rise to dire warnings about the national and international consequences of global warming, rising sea levels etc. These may well be true and justified, in fact I think that they probably are.

However I now and then flip through my copy of *Essex People 1750-1900* edited by A.F.J. Brown and look at what our forebears said about the weather. Here are a few bits from the diary of Farmer Charles Hicks of Great Holland 1778-1865:

1814 Frost set in on Christmas Eve and lasted 14 weeks. The Thames froze over and a bullock roasted on the ice. 1836 Saturday 24th December. The ground was covered with snow and the wind blew strong from the

N.E. and kept increasing until it blew a perfect hurricane such as few men could remember. It continued until Thursday night.

1840 15th October. It rained in torrents all night and continued without intermission up to Saturday night. On the Sunday morning there was never known such a large flood. The top of the posts and backs of gates were seen just above the water.

1860 An unusual quantity of rain fell both winter and summer. The land was so wet even in summer the horses couldn't be got on the land to plough or to cart sometimes for days.

The following year was nearly as bad. Heavy land farmers had cause to remember the years 1860-1861!

Someone said Britain doesn't have a climate it just has weather.

While browsing through the above tome I came across this entry for July 1775 in John Croziers diary:

John Conyers of Copped Hall was robbed of his plate to the value of £1,500. The stragem was brought about and executed by an old coachman who formerly lived in the family. Just before this unwarranted act his master rescued him from transportation. He and his accomplices were taken and executed at Chelmsford. It was very remarkable that the coachman (who was the principal) robbed on Monday, apprehended on Tuesday, taken on Wednesday, tried on Thursday and hanged on Saturday. Mr. Conyers recovered all his plate!

Heigh ho for the good old days.



from *London's Forest*, PJS Perceval 1909

## STOP PRESS

Because of the Foot and Mouth outbreak, the Conservators have decided to close the Forest north of a line from Woodridden Hill to Goldings Hill. Any extension of the ban could affect our walks programme, so please check on (020) 8529 8594 or (020) 8529 0620 before each walk.

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Please send all letters to the Secretary and Editor:  
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## Sprawl Control

The Department of the Environment Transport and the Regions (D.E.T.R.) issues from time to time Planning Policy Guidance (PPG's) which guide local planning authorities in respect of national planning matters so that all bodies sing from the same hymn sheet. It's part of the joined-up government endeavour.

Last year PPG3 Housing appeared heralding a new approach to the task of covering the countryside with concrete. The old discredited 'predict and provide' was hurled aside in favour of 'plan, monitor and manage'.

This according to Environment Secretary John Prescott "will radically alter the way we build new homes in this country". The PPGs policies include a sequential approach indicating that 'greenfield' sites should not be used for new housing developments when 'brownfield' (generally, previously developed) sites are available and remain unused within the area.

The guidance comes into effect immediately and a letter from Go-East (not an airline serving Asia but the Government Office for the East of England) declares that "Any application for housing development on a greenfield site must be determined taking into account PPG3 This is so irrespective of whether the site has been allocated in a plan".

The Council for the Protection of Rural England has welcomed the new PPG and has announced a campaign 'Sprawl Patrol' which will seek to promote early implementation of the Guidance. Their briefing paper on the subject carries the declaration that "Over 260 sq.kms. of rural land is already in the pipeline for development" (Urban Task Force) and Over 280sq.kms. of urban land is wasted and available for housing (National Land Use database). Sounds convincing but is the vacant land and the demand in the same places?

Having waved a magic wand and given the impression of great changes and the ability to squeeze a quart into a pint pot (or should that be a litre into a demi-litre pot?) the DETR has now come up with a draft RPG9 Regional Planning Guidance for the South East.

This one is principally about housing projections and is the latest stage in the vexed matter of how many houses are required for the already overcrowded S.E. The figures were originally proposed in the South East Regional Plan (SERPLAN), a committee consisting basically of the Planners from each of the relevant counties. Their original proposals were that annually 34,468 homes should be built in the region - not counting London which has its own ration - Essex's ration would be 4476.

The Government then asked Professor Crow to examine the SERPLAN Report and he came up with 54925 regionally and 7500 for Essex. This aroused a storm of protest and severe criticism by a Parliamentary Committee and his report was effectively disowned by Ministers.

Last March DETR produced the first draft RPG9 for consultation suggesting 43000 regionally and 5420 for Essex. This was better than Crow but was not very enthusiastically received so the current draft has the figures 39000 annually for the region and 5240 for Essex. The projections go up to 2006 after which RPG9 suggests that the annual figure will have to rise.

The Housing Minister Nick Raynsford says of all this "We have a once in a generation opportunity to get it right planning is the key to creating sustainable places in which to live, as well as delivering an urban renaissance and a thriving countryside. It is in all our interests to ensure that we succeed".

I expect that by the time our grandchildren grow up they'll have to find a new definition of sustainable.

The Forest is of course not and hardly can be, insulated from development either those foreshadowed above or others. None-the-less it was nice to see Superintendent John Besent's report to the Epping Forest Management Plan Steering Group about Protecting the Forest and its Environs.

Many members will recall with enthusiasm the talk given by John Besent on this subject at Hawkey Hall on December 1999. (reported in March 2000 Newsletter).

The Forest authorities have had meetings meantime with Epping Forest District Council and Essex County Council to bring to their attention the special qualities of the Forest and the adverse impact development pressure including roads and traffic are having in the area.

Further developments took place when the Countryside Agency agreed to organise a Seminar on the subject last November at The Warren. This time officers from Waltham Forest and Redbridge Councils participated and shortly there will be a draft report of the proceedings and the consensus achieved in respect of the way forward.

It would be very much welcomed if the Friends and other relevant bodies were given the opportunity of a sight of the report before it is given to local authorities for ratification.

Waltham Forest does have a Traffic Restraint Policy (not that it seems to work) and this could be used in conjunction perhaps with restraint policies on Forest Roads. On a personal note, anything to ease the parking problems in Frederica Road!

**Harry Bitten**

## The Natural Aspect

Once again I find it is impossible to think about the Forest without considering the recent weather. As I write it has been raining all day and I know the Forest is already literally waterlogged. We were told last autumn was the wettest on record, we have been told that the 1990's was the hottest decade since records began, and, it now seems to be widely accepted that global warming is a fact.

Although there may be warmer average temperatures coming, there are also said to be greater extremes of temperature in store for us. I recently came across the following details about the 'Great Frost' of 1890-91. It lasted for 6 weeks from the 9<sup>th</sup> December, during which time the temperature did not rise above minus 2°F, causing water mains to freeze when they were two feet underground. The Thames was blocked with ice for most of the time.

A new book on London shows a painting of the Thames c 1677 indicating ice flows on the river showing a thickness of 5-6 feet ! Shops and stalls were set up on the ice for weeks. Could it soon become as cold as that again? We had some snow this January that lasted a few days and conditions were such that it stayed on the trees long enough to turn the woodland into the kind of 'fairy-land' we saw in the past. Until then my seven-year-old grandson had not seen snow in his lifetime. The last 'decent' fall of snow was apparently in 1992. I can remember skating on Connaught Water and Highams Park Lake but that was years ago.

During the past two decades the great Beech trees of

the northern part of the Forest have apparently suffered greatly from the dry summer conditions of the 1980's and 90's - you may remember, some ponds dried up completely. At the moment they could not be more full. But more than one wet autumn and winter is needed for most of those Beeches to recover. It is the trend of change that is important, not individual seasons. Many of these Beech trees, now towards the end of their lifecycle, have been dying at the top, and leaves have grown to only half their normal healthy size. At the time, much of this was attributed to acid rain, now it seems to be widely accepted that the stress had more to do with the hot dry summers. It will be interesting to see whether there is a great difference this coming summer.

Recent management work in the Forest has included re-pollarding groups of old trees and the creation of 'maiden pollards'. This latter work - the creation of maiden pollards - is part of an ongoing policy. It occurs to me that maybe some explanation about pollards will be helpful in case we have taken it too much for granted that everyone fully understands our the frequent references to pollards etc.

The ancient right of harvesting wood from the common waste at regular intervals was known as 'lopping'. When common rights existed over land, such as Epping Forest, where the trees were cut, or lopped according to custom, some eight feet from the ground, the beheaded tree was called a 'pollard'. On such a tree the new shoots would then grow out of reach of the browsing cattle and deer and form new branches. Trees beheaded for the first time were called 'maiden pollards'. Such pollards or lopped trees were cut many times at regular intervals (possibly 15-18 years) over the centuries and could reach great age and size. Many are still growing in the Forest and of course these are the 'strange shaped trees' so typical of Epping Forest (see our logo on the front of the newsletter). Lopping, as a common practice ceased mainly during the Nineteenth century. The exact date varied in each Manor. Regular lopping was last undertaken as a 'Right' in the Manor of Loughton on Staples Hill in 1877. You may ask, why are pollards so important? Two reasons are usually given. Pollarding retards growth, like pruning, thus the trees grow slowly and are older than they look... as they are usually so old and growing in an ancient forest, they have a rich flora and fauna living upon them - mosses, lichens, liverworts and fungi, and invertebrate animal life such as rare beetles, moths and other insects. These interdependent communities are rare and are one of the reasons why Epping Forest has the extra protection of SSSI status (a Site of Special Scientific Interest). The second reason is that they represent an almost unique relic of a medieval system of woodland management called 'wood-pasture'. I suppose a third reason could be that by the characteristic lopped-pollard shape they are a reminder of the Forest's history... in a form that some folk find attractive. 'Scrub' is a word that might also need definition. Usually it means bushes and young trees growing *in the wrong place* - as when wild flowers in gardens are called weeds. The 'wrong place' being in grassland that we wish to keep as grassland. However, scrub or bushes and young trees have a wildlife value of their own. As a habitat for birds and animals and a food source of pollen and nectar for insects - these in turn are, of course, a food source for the birds and other wildlife. But scrub eventually grows rank or moribund and if its value as scrub is to be retained it is best re-cut at regular intervals (10-15 years). Growth cut, or lopped, down to the ground is said to have been 'coppiced'.

Another recent management operation that you may see in the Forest does involve coppicing bushes with the intention of allowing more light to 'get-in' to encourage healthy regrowth and recreate the dense thorn thickets beloved by Nightingales and other songbirds.

One wonders, coming back to the weather, that given the present high water table, growth this spring and summer will be quite considerable. Often however it is Birches and Sallows (pussy willow) that grow faster than the Blackthorns and Hawthorns - as happened after the fires of 1975-6.

My apologies for 'the lecture' - but I hope it has made things a little bit clearer.

I have been watching a Magpie at my feeding table on and off during this morning. He/she has been collecting a large beak-full of meat and fat at regular intervals and then burying it in the lawn after digging a hole. Before returning for more, it carefully poked a covering of grass into the hole to hide the food. Just the same behaviour as Jays in the autumn when burying the acorns that will spread young oak trees over the grasslands. I suppose this demonstrates the truth behind the fables of Magpies stealing the princess's shiny rings and hiding them. Incidentally, there were Robins and Greenfinches around at the same time feeding quite unconcernedly. Perhaps they noticed that the Magpie was bloated and had that glazed look in his eye!

I hope when you are reading this, the March winds are drying up the Forest so that we can enjoy the spring colours and migrant birds with reasonably dry feet?

**Ken Hoy**

## Walk Reports

Friday November 10<sup>th</sup> was the one bright and sunny day in a period of wind, rain and floods. At 10-30 am there were 30 of us booted and ready to go.

We walked northwards down the Green Ride and then turned off to look at Staples Brook. The last serious rain was a day or two before and as the Brook drains most of the Forest ridge up to the Wake Arms - in other words just the top of the watershed - the water level had already dropped down to a nearly normal winter level. However there was evidence that it had been nearly two feet higher very recently. Staples or Loughton Brook is a stream showing all the classic signs of natural river formation. We noticed the fresh deposits of sand and shingle on the insides of the many bends and the clean way the current was still sweeping round the 'cliffs' that formed the outside of each meander. Some folk could recall school geography lesson and there was a mention of 'oxbows'. 'Oxbows' are where meanders have become so accentuated that the stream cuts through to the next bend and leaves the 'oxbow' bend stranded and drying up. There are examples of where this has happened in the past on Staples Brook, but they are down-stream from where we were.

We turned up the tributary stream coming from Debden Slade and crossed the Green Ride. Within living memory Debden Slade was considerably larger. It is an example of how many of the Forest plains are diminishing as bushes and trees encroach due to the loss of grazing rabbits and deer.

After passing by the great Oak and large ancient Hornbeam pollard on the edge of the Slade. We took a diagonal route up the slope towards Loughton Camp -

the Iron-age Hill Fort. As it was a brilliant day in early November the colours of the Beeches and Hornbeams were wonderful. We paused at the top, (so that at least I could regain my breath!) as we had climbed up nearly a hundred feet from the valley bottom. 2,300 years ago, with the trees maybe absent and the hills covered in heather, we could see how the encampment was strategically very strongly placed.

We noted the dry pit on the northern side of the 'camp' and could imagine how, after nearly 270 years of leaf-mould being deposited, a 'dug-out' roofed with branches and turf could have once hidden Dick Turpin. At least one Victorian map shows the spot marked as "Dick Turpin's Cave"

We made our way through the sunlit trees to Blackweir Pond - the 'Lost Pond' - and here cameras came into use. Nearby we saw the great coppiced Beech 'stool' or clump, some 'shoots' of which had been pollarded, perhaps in the first part of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and thus were what are called 'coppards'. The tree - for it is one tree - is more impressive because old sand or gravel excavations around it have exposed the stool's common root system. Recently it has been estimated by expert opinion to be possibly as old as 900 to 1,000 years. If so we might consider it to be the oldest living thing on the Forest - however, in other parts of the Forest there are circles of pollards with an even greater diameter. Should they also have a common root origin they would obviously be much older.



*The great coppiced Beech near Blackweir Pond*

It might seem strange that the 'Lost Pond' is on top of Blackweir Hill - but it was a gravel pit - thus we had to walk a long way downhill to Baldwin's pond !

As reported in the last newsletter, the embankment or dam of Baldwin's pond has recently been extensively repaired. We had heard that the high rainfall had damaged it. Nothing was visible however, although trees have been felled to prevent people walking on the slope

We returned to Earls Path via the 'Clay Road' and the Green Ride. The recent rains had heavily eroded the path again. The 'Clay Road' is really a relic of Forest history. The Rev. Maitland, Lord of the Manor, had cut the 'road' through the Forest towards High Beach in the 1860's. He had enclosed most of the Loughton woods, felled trees and marked out housing plots in the Forest before

Tom Willingale's legal suit against him caused Parliament to bring the whole enclosure movement to a halt.

**Ken Hoy**

### **Walk from Chingford Plain 9th December 00**

This afternoon's pre-Christmas walk should have started at 1.30pm but we were a little late because I'd forgotten my boots and had to go back for them!

About thirty of us got underway, on a chilly but rainfree day, crossing Bury Road and through Hawk Wood to Pole Hill halting briefly to point out, for the umpteenth time, the clump of Butcher's Broom well known to many members. However there were among the group some who came new to the plant so we persuaded ourselves that it is always worth stopping to look.

At Pole Hill we headed westwards downhill and halted at the bottom to look out and ponder on the considerable difference between the built-up nature of the otherside of the reservoirs and the sylvan delights of our side. Long may it last. Thank heavens for the River Lea!

We circled around Hawk Wood on the posted ride and then turned down towards Daisy Plain to pick up the path looking left over to Yates' Meadow. The grazing field in between used to have Jack Snipe during the winter when there was an overflow stream from the filter plant which used to be there. But now that an underground pipeline has been put in the Snipe have gone.

On reaching the gardens of the houses we turned into Hawk Wood and then having re-crossed Bury Road returned to the car park.

Here the commissariat produced white wine, lemonade and mince pies all of which disappeared extremely quickly. We had some unexpected help in this by an elderly chap who was evidently hanging about in the car park.

He eagerly took advantage of the free food and drink being dispensed before anyone realised HE WAS NOT ONE OF US! Well, it was Christmas so we didn't make him join the Friends and then do the walk!

**Harry Bitten**

### **Walk from the Snaresbrook Road Car Park 28.1.01**

This was billed as a walk around Hollow Ponds but as the 24 of us assembled it seemed such a beautiful morning we thought it a good idea to extend it a bit!

We very soon realised that the usually dry and dusty Leyton Flats was very different now as the result of the months of rain. Silvery snakes of frozen water threaded the whole area and the grass was sitting on top of six inches of watery sponge.

Having sloshed over to the Green Man underpass we thankfully enjoyed the short dry walk to Bushwood.

Ground conditions in Bushwood were pretty wet but soon we were onto the open Wanstead Flats and threading our way through furious games of football.

Having crossed Lake House Road we halted by the Model Yacht Pond much discussed in our Newsletter, and wondered what the fuss was about. As the result of several years of dry summers and, it is said, damage to the concrete liner the pond had dried-up some time ago.

Many local residents had urged the Conservators to reinstate the pond and this had been agreed to and consultants asked to advise in the matter. Unfortunately their suggestion included a membrane liner and a hide for bird watching at a total cost of £400,000 which seems excessive.

In fact the pond is now full of water and certainly doesn't look in need of any reinstatement although how long this will last only time will show.

We headed back on the return journey noting en route the fine re-growth of broom which three years ago had been burnt to a frazzle.

Back in Bushwood we paused to look at the group of massive sweet chestnuts there and I was delighted to 'spot' a lesser spotted woodpecker alighting on the top of the canopy for a few moments before flying off.

Leyton Flats hadn't dried out despite the sunny conditions so our boots took on another few pints of water before we got back to the car park and dispersed in search of dry socks and shoes and something warming.

**Harry Bitten**

## Member's Letters

### **Letter from Ron Budd...**

During Ken Hoy's very enjoyable Autumn walk on Friday 10th November we stopped for a while to admire the topography of Loughton Camp. This looked particularly attractive with the sun bringing out the autumn colours. Whilst recounting what was known of the history of the site Ken touched on the ever popular myth of Boudicca and the Romans, and suggestions over the years that her last stand and subsequent suicide took place in this area. I have just been reading 'The Complete Guide To The Battlefields of Britain' by David Smurthwaite. He states that Boudicca pursued the Romans led by their governor Suetonius north from London destroying Verulamium (St.Albans) on the way. The Romans then took up a defensive position in a defile with a forest at the rear and an open plain in front. With only 10,000 men they faced an army with estimates as high as 230,000. With their superior weapons and training the Romans eventually drove the British back where they became trapped against the wagons bearing the women and children. Tacitus the Roman Historian puts the death toll as 400 Romans and 80,000 British. The site of the battle is given as somewhere in the Midlands and a site at Mancetter in Warwickshire to the south east of Atherstone has been suggested. There is evidence of a large earthworks in this area with evidence of settlement around AD60-150 so this may give some credence to the site.

On another subject entirely I have just read a small item in the Autumn edition of 'Natural World' which says that special boxes have been installed by London Wildlife Trust at Sydenham Hill Wood near Dulwich to encourage female stag beetles to lay their eggs.

Epping Forest is apparently a noted area for these beetles and infact in your opening article in November's Newsletter you state that this area is one of only three outstanding localities in the U.K. In spite of this the only one I have seen in recent years is a dead one on display in the Information Centre. I don't know how many of our members have had better luck. Am I just unobservant or are they becoming rare. If the latter perhaps the scheme at Dulwich might be worth looking into.

### **Letter from Peter Gould...**

*We have been told there have been several sightings of Stag Beetles, mainly in Chingford gardens.* **Ed.**

Ken Hoy's "How Well do you know the Forest?" No. 8 prompts me to submit the following notes about what happened to the Forest in Snaresbrook and Wanstead. Bear in mind that the estate of Wanstead House and its

predecessors was originally carved out of the Forest, as Forest Gate, on the south side of the park suggests; all the land northwards to Snaresbrook was owned, or under the control of, the Lord, as many local deeds will confirm.

### **Eagle Pond and the Snares Brook**

Eagle Pond is certainly artificial, as you can see from over the road (by the "Eagle" pub); the dam, a few feet in height, probably dates from about 1715. The Snares Brook rises somewhere in Gilbert's Slade and flows southwards before being faced with the rising ground on which the Crown Courts now stand, to turn through a right angle and then flow eastwards and north-eastwards to enter the Roding, where there is now a Sports Ground at the end of Elmcroft Avenue. Damming it near the Eagle created the Lake which already appears on Rocque's 1745 map of London.

Jean Rocque carried out estate surveys for various land-owners, including Sir Richard Child/Viscount Castlemaine/Earl Tylney, who acquired Wanstead House in about 1709; fortunately he included these surveys in his monumental map of London published in 1745/6, so we have an accurate picture of our area at that time.

My sketch map is based on Rocque's Map with the contours from the present-day 1:10,000 O.S. map superimposed to help understand what follows. These contours show the valley of the Snares Brook quite distinctly, and can be identified on the ground by dips in local roads, particularly Hermon Hill.

Rocque's Map is accurate enough to allow direct comparison with the O.S. map and shows the brook meandering from the "Snares Pond" through Mobs Hole to pass between fields along the line of what is now Elmcroft Avenue.

The "Eagle" Inn is clearly identifiable on Rocque's Map, but in the 19th century another property was built just to the south, with Valley Lodge and Valley Cottage enjoying the view down the valley towards the Roding. Parts of these survived until recently as Dora Parfitt's Riding Stables.

Rocque's Map also shows that chunks were already taken from the Forest in Snaresbrook - for Brick Kilns from Lady Maynard's Wood (roughly on the site of the Forest School); from Great Shrubbrush for Wanstead Hall (subsequently developed as The Drive and Malford Grove, leaving a strip of what is still Forest land between The Drive and the Woodford High Road) and for the "Eagle" Inn itself (taken from Little Shrubbrush).

Valley Lodge, Valley Cottage and their extensive grounds were purchased by the Eastern Counties Railway from a Mr Reynolds in November 1855 because the Stratford to Loughton line severed the property. The Great Eastern Railway (the successor to the ECR) sold, in 1867, "a house and 1¾ acres known as the Old Pleasure Ground" (which probably means a formal garden) in Snaresbrook, and the houses and immediate grounds survived until quite recently. The 1852 Schedule and Plan for the branch described another parcel of land part-owned by the same Mr Reynolds - "Wood and Pasture Land, Part of Epping Forest (known as Little Shrubbrush...along with the Commissioners of Woods and Forests, the Lord of the Manor, Surveyor of Highways and the Rate-Payers of Wanstead"! I think that this piece of land was that which lay to the eastern side of the railway and on which stand a pair of single-storey cottages built by the Great Eastern Railway after 1862. It also contains the elegant villas of Sylvan Road which appear in

the 1871 Census and which were all occupied by well-to-do people who were almost certainly among the first commuters to travel from Snaresbrook Station!

It may well have been this same area of land which Lord Rich sought, in 1563, as Lieutenant of the Forest to "enclose and fell part of the Forest known as Little Shrubbrush". Most of Little Shrubbrush was "Lord's Wood" but includes some common land, and Rich sought to enclose on the grounds that his deer were continually disturbed by people and cattle! His appeal failed but no doubt, being Lord Rich (who did very well out of the Dissolution of the Monasteries!) he got his own way in the end.

Rocque's Map shows a further part of Little Shrubbrush on the east side of the road to Woodford Bridge (Hermon Hill), and this could have been the part which included Common Land as it was this area which saw the accelerated building in the (1860's -1880's) of more "commuter housing" along Hermon Hill, the present Grosvenor Road and Wellesley Road, etc on what had always been open land.

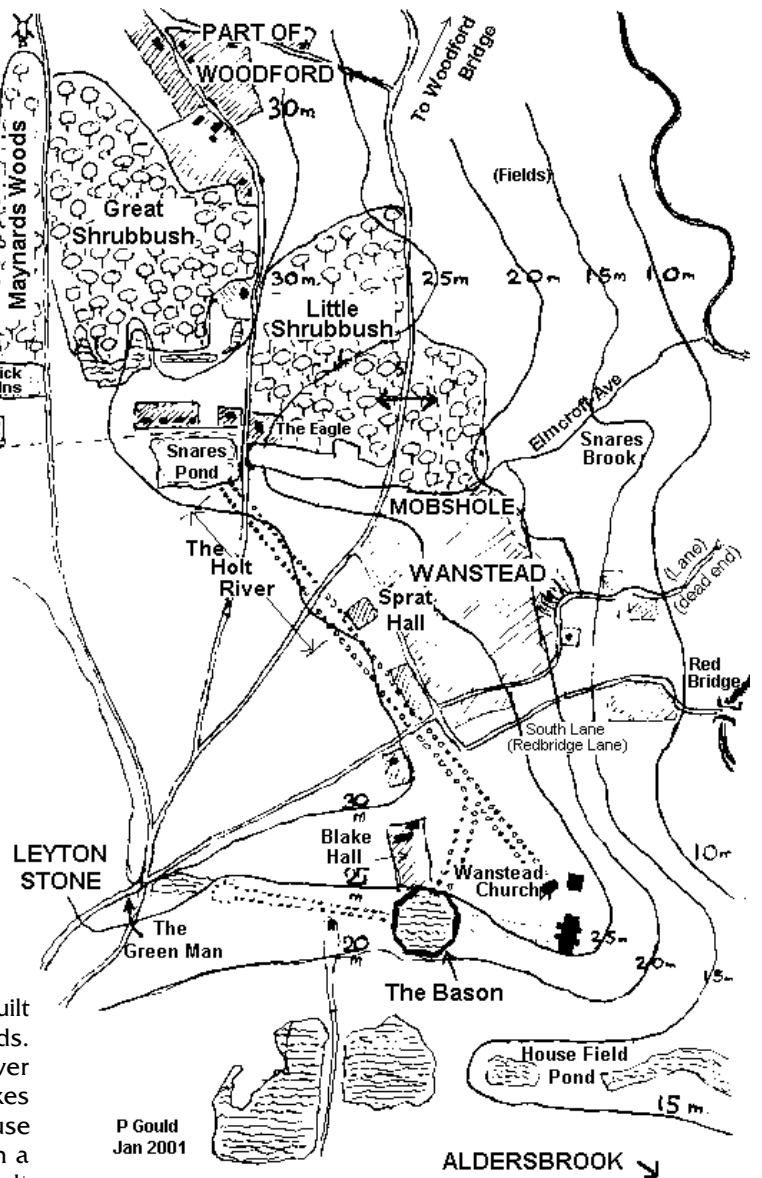
These scraps of history serve to remind us of a very much more continuous forest in medieval times.

**The Holt River**

Not only did the lands of Wanstead Park extend to Snaresbrook, there was also a very real physical link between the Eagle Pond (or Snares Pond as it was known in the mid-18th Century) and the Octagon Pond south of Overton Drive (or The Bason, as it was then known).

Sir Richard Child who had acquired the late 16th century Wanstead House in about 1709, not only built the grand new house in 1715, but improved the grounds. He had a very able gardener who was also a clever engineer. Adam Holt enlarged the two semi-circular lakes into one large lake; instead of the drive to the house passing between, it now went round the north side in a semicircle (hence the curve in Overton Drive). Holt realised that the very slight difference in level between the Snares Brook and the Bason (as it appears on Rocque's Map) was just enough to feed the latter provided the water level at the former was raised by damming. As you will see from the contours, it was possible to do this by virtue of the high ground to the south which caused the Snares Brook to turn eastwards. However, the ridge also meant that there was a high point near the present Wanstead Police Station, from which there was a gentle fall south-eastwards towards Wanstead House. On Rocque's Map there is an avenue of trees all the way from the SE corner of the Snares Pond to Wanstead Church, and it is almost certain that he laid his conduit along this avenue before turning due south to feed the "Bason". At the north end he could only achieve his scheme by cutting a channel from the Snares Pond to the high point in the avenue of trees on the line of the present Spratt Hall Road, and this channel was known locally for many years as the Holt River. There does not seem to be any trace of this "river" now, but some of the houses in Spratt Hall Road get occasional flooding in their cellars.

Holt also provided an overflow for the "Bason" by linking it to the stream to the south which, by 1745, had already been dammed to form the chain of lakes in Wanstead Park. The one now known as the "Shoulder of



Mutton" Pond is shown on Rocque's Map as the "House Field Pond", which is a pretty clear indication that the original medieval manor house was, quite sensibly, located near the stream.

**Letter from Mrs Rosemary J Cobbing, of Athens, Ontario...**

Since joining the Friends six years ago, I have thoroughly enjoyed reading the Newsletters. November 2000 is especially meaningful to me, as it has touched my childhood. I lived in Peterborough Road, just three streets away from Whipps Cross, in the direction of the Bakers Arms.

I spent a lot of time playing and exploring in what the children just called 'the forest', now I know it as Leyton Flats. At that time we knew every area of it, the holly bushes were always so beautiful on the hospital side of the road. During the war, I remember there was a P.O.W camp there, on the Hollow Pond side of the road. Families used to walk past there on a Sunday afternoon, and poke cigarettes etc. through the bars to the prisoners. It must have been very minimum security.

Also, as you say in your article Mr Hoy, every child goes to Eagle Pond to feed the ducks, my father used to take me in the 30's and my brother in the 40's

The other article I found of interest was by John Howes (actually I find them all interesting, but this one was of special interest to me). When I was 11 years old, in 1944, I attended Walthamstow High School for Girls, and in the first classroom that our class occupied, there was a painting of Jacob Epstein's, part of the Forest, which he had presented to the school. Needless to say, it was the pride and joy of the school. As I have not been inside the school since leaving in 1949, I have no idea if the painting is there or not. I understand there have been many changes and renovations to the school since that time.

I would like to say thank you at this time for all the hard work that you all do, both for the preservation of Epping Forest and for the reporting of all the activity through the Newsletters.

*We are trying to trace the picture to which Mrs Cobbing refers. If anyone can remember the painting or tell us anything further about it we will very grateful.*

#### **A letter from H. R. Hall...**

I wrote to you sometime ago explaining my early associations with the Forest and with the late and much missed Bernard Ward. I have recently retired from the National Trust and, sadly, have moved even further away from Epping Forest, this being based on sheer economics (what isn't these days). However, once the dust has settled from moving after nearly 27 years in the same place, I hope to resume my Forest visits if we still have a working railway system.

One other person I used to know at Chingford in the 1950's was Fred Speakman, when he was involved with the Field Study Centre in its early days at the Jubilee Retreat. I lost contact with him when I moved away to Surrey, and often wonder if he is still with us. His books still turn up occasionally in bookshops but I do not recollect seeing any reference to him in the Newsletters.

On a completely different subject – the letter from Mr. M. Faraway and other references to the last war in the March 1999 Newsletter brought back many memories as I spent a lot of time around the Forest during that period. I well remember the unexploded bomb dump in the north-east corner of Chngford Plain, and the so called 'bomb road' that ran through Bury Wood to reach it, now presumably part of the Jubilee Ride. As youngsters we used to stand on Chingford Plain, and on the top of Yardley Hill to watch the V1 'doodlebugs' rumble over. It was a bit like Russian roulette when they cut out while still coming towards us. I also remember the V2 rocket which landed close to Butlers Retreat – there was a pond there before the rocket made it somewhat larger.

*Members who were attending Walthamstow schools in the 1950's and 60's may well have been introduced to Epping Forest by **Fred Speakman**.*

*After the death of his first wife he took a year 'off' and spent much of it at night studying the badgers that were more common in the Forest then, for it was following that year that he began the Walthamstow Field Study Centre at Jubilee Retreat.*

*In 1962 he moved to Roseville Field Centre at High Beech and taught from there with his second wife, 'Kit', until they retired in 1971. By then The Borough of Waltham Forest had acquired the 'Suntrap' (High Beach) premises to which it had moved the Jubilee Retreat Centre in 1967. Following Fred's retirement all Waltham Forest Primary Schools used the Suntrap Field Centre. A few*

*years later he went to live in Barbados where he died in 1982. 'The Forest by Night' is an account of his year of retreat to the Forest. But perhaps 'A Poacher's Tale, which he wrote with Alf Curtis and the 'A Keeper's Tale' - the story of Keeper Butt's life in the Forest, are probably better known. Both the latter books give a fascinating glimpse of the Forest in the first part of the Twentieth century.*

*Suntrap Field Centre, and the Hawkwood Centre, still receive pupils from Waltham Forest Schools. Recently an organisation - '**Friends of the Forest Centres**' - has been formed to support the two Centres. Members, ex-pupils, teachers or parents who wish to support the Centres should phone 020 8508 0611. (**Please see Dates For Your Diary**).*

**Ken Hoy**

## **Jacob Epstein**

The note by John Howes in the last newsletter about the painting by Epstein of Epping Forest, which is now in the Walsall Art Gallery, and the photograph of a similar painting by Epstein provided by Adrienne Reynolds, which is in the Art Gallery of NSW, Australia, led me to do a little research on Epstein's paintings.

The Tate Gallery at Millbank, has 24 items of work by Epstein, 20 of which are sculpture and 4 paintings. One of the paintings is a watercolour and gouache of Epping Forest painted in about 1933. The painting was acquired by the Tate in 1990 but is not on display. However, an image of it is accessible from the Tate Catalogue which is on the Internet:

[www.tate.org.uk/servlet/WorkImage?id=17148](http://www.tate.org.uk/servlet/WorkImage?id=17148)

I have been in touch with the Art Gallery of NSW who confirm that they still have the painting of Epping Forest by Epstein. Again this is a watercolour and gouache painted in 1933. It was acquired by the Gallery in 1987 as a bequest by Beatrice Moresby in memory of her mother.





I also heard recently that another painting of Epping Forest by Epstein is for sale at a London gallery. I subsequently visited the Gallery and saw the painting which has very vivid colours and is a slightly modernistic interpretation. I did enquire whether the Corporation of London would be prepared to purchase the painting but the answer was 'no'.

Epstein's enthusiasm for painting Epping Forest is summed up in his autobiography, first published in 1955, in which he comments that:

'During the summer of 1933 I painted nearly a hundred watercolours of Epping Forest, where I rented a cottage. I would go out with my daughter and we did not have to walk far before seeing something worth painting. As usual with me, what started as a mere diversion became in the end a passion, and I could think of nothing else but painting.

When I later exhibited these paintings in a London gallery, it was a source of annoyance to some critics that I had painted so many.'

**Richard Morris**

## The Forest Supper

The Forest Supper was (I think) another success. The ticket procedure went well thanks to David Shukla; the food and drink sufficed; the raffle made a profit thanks to generous donations from members and to the marketing skill of Denis Moss and his helpers; the quizzes partly confounded thanks to Harry; we didn't lose any of Denis Chasney's cutlery and contrary to the usual we made a profit of £440.

Thanks to all those named above and to the Magpie's Nest Restaurant for the excellent food and professional friendly service, and to the committee members who helped all evening to make things run smoothly.

We were glad to welcome John Haynes Chairman and John Bird Deputy Chairman of the Epping Forest & Open Spaces Committee, our 4 Verderers and John Besent and members of his staff. We took the opportunity of the gathering of 250 of our members to present to John Besent, Superintendent for the last 23 years, a leaving memento of his years in charge of Epping Forest – an album of photographs charting some of the events of that time, and much more.

We all send our best wishes for a long happy and active retirement to him and Sheila, and look forward to seeing him back in the Forest from time to time. To facilitate this, we made him an honorary life member of the Friends. We have asked John Harvey, retired Senior Verderer to write an appreciation for us.

Our best wishes also to Jeremy Wisenfeld who took over as Superintendent on February 1st. He is only the 7th Superintendent since the post was created in 1878.

He has a degree in economics and trained as an accountant but later turned to environmental work.

He was Manager for the National Trust at Hatfield Forest before joining Epping Forest in 1997 as Deputy Superintendent.

### **DONORS OF RAFFLE PRIZES (rough alphabetical order)**

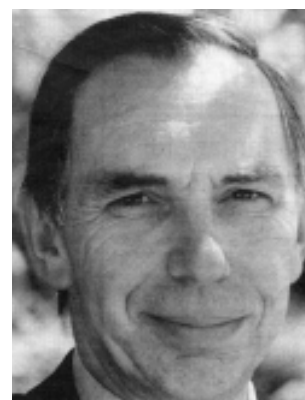
Anonymous – three people wished to remain, Misses Anslow, Sheila and John Besent, Irene and John Buchan, Barbara Blossom, Pat Bishop, Wendy Boardman, Pat Bassett, Maggie Charles, P.Cox, Chinman Dr. Dormer, P.Draper, Joan Ellis, Carol Francis Joan and Harry Edler,

Pat Fearne, C.Gimson, Pat Gunn, Fred Garwood, John Holtom, V.Higginson, Hall, S.Hobbs, Mrs. Harris, P.Hamilton, Helen Jones, Erica Jackson, M.Kramer, Leonora Levene, Mr. & Mrs. Moxey, Hean and Denis Moss, Mr. & Mrs. Nicholas, Mr. & Mrs. Oliver, Anne Pearson, Mr. & Mrs. Royds, Pat Rolfe, Mr. & Mrs. H. Smith, Mr. & Mrs. Shukla, Jean Smith, Joan Stowers, R.Sylvester, Mr. & Mrs. Tull, Mr. & Mrs. N. Taylor, V.Templeman, Mrs. B.Williams, Mr. & Mrs. Willis, J.Weisman,

**Editor**

## A Tribute to John I Besent OBE FRICS on his Retirement by John Harvey

After some years of involvement in estate management with different local authorities, John Besent took special pleasure in being selected at the age of 34 to succeed Alfred Qvist as Superintendent of Epping Forest in 1978, the year that marked the centenary of the Corporation of London's management of the Forest.



Happy at the prospect of managing some 6000 acres of green and pleasant countryside for the recreation and enjoyment of the public, he was assured by Sam Sheppard, the late and larger-than-life Chairman of the Corporation's Epping Forest & Open Spaces Committee, that he would be "his own gaffer" in running the Forest.

He soon found himself faced with problems that his predecessors had been largely spared. Dutch Elm Disease had caused havoc over wide areas of the Forest, and its beech trees suffered from a succession of droughts. Critics referred to a dying Forest rather than a living one. This and the great storm of 1987 called for remedial work on an unprecedented scale and much of this work too attracted its critics, who did not always understand its purposes.

Additionally, closer involvement with Government departments and agencies such as English Nature meant that John was less his own gaffer than his predecessors had been and required expansion not only of the workforce but of the expertise available at his Warren headquarters. The consequent escalation in running costs, borne by the Corporation of London, meant that John Besent found himself increasingly involved in desk-work, producing successions of technical and financial reports designed to secure the support needed to discharge his responsibilities.

More and more, these involved dealing with authorities other than the Corporation. The Department of Transport's plans for the construction of the M11 Link Road demanded his attention through most of his 23 years at the helm. The survival of the Forest called for eternal vigilance in dealing with the plans or ambitions of Government or Local Government agencies, who did not always understand the paramount duty imposed by Parliament on the Conservators of Epping Forest to keep the Forest uninclosed and unbuild on.

His greatest concern on retiring from his post is that which he has termed "creeping suburbanisation". It was this same concern that led the Corporation of London to begin its fight for the preservation of the Forest some



150 years ago. Although much has been achieved, there are still those who look with envy on the land that the Corporation of London has continued zealously to hold in trust for London's people.

John Besent can take pride in the fact that his management has seen a positive increase in the acreage of the Forest and has also reinforced the protection of Forest land by the Corporation's acquisition of important areas of buffer land in order to keep creeping suburbanisation at bay. His hope is that the Local Authorities whose residents benefit so much from the preservation of the Forest will themselves espouse policies that help to protect the Forest by reducing the need for the Corporation to tie up capital in buying buffer land that could usefully be spent in other aspects of Forest maintenance.

Strongly convinced that the absence of cattle grazing has been detrimental to the ecology of the Forest, he has worked hard to bring about the return of a measure of grazing in specific areas, emphasizing that a fundamental purpose of the 1878 Act of Parliament that has led to the preservation of Epping Forest was the protection of grazing rights on Forest land.

John Besent will miss Epping Forest but recognises that changes which the Corporation wishes to introduce in the over-all management strategy for the many Open Spaces that it administers make this an appropriate time to hand his responsibilities over to his Deputy with, whom he has worked closely for these last four years, confident that Jeremy Wisenfeld will prove an excellent choice as Epping Forest's seventh Superintendent.

All who value the great amenity that Epping Forest provides have reason to be grateful to John Resent for the 23 years of his life that he has dedicated to its protection and preservation. We can best express our gratitude by renewing our own dedication to ensuring its survival.

John Besent came quickly to perceive the need to promote a wider awareness of the importance of the Forest as a major public amenity. He sought closer relationships with local authorities and local organisations representing public interests in the Forest and played a full part in expanding information and educational services, the latter in co-operation with the Field Studies Council and the Epping Forest Centenary Trust.

## **Restructuring of the Epping Forest Department**

The Superintendent of Epping Forest is supported by some 80 staff in his task of caring for the Forest. Since the passing of the Epping Forest Act (1878), the acreage of the Forest has increased in size and to date, along with its supporting bufferlands, the Epping Forest Department is responsible for carrying out the day to day management of nearly 8,000 acres of land.

Today, there is much emphasis on good communication, teamwork and shortened lines of command within any work force to ensure that best practices can operate. Much consideration has been given to the restructuring of the Epping Forest Department to streamline its chains of command and form effective teams to help all staff meet the challenges of best value, and the various objectives set out in the current Management Plan.

Last autumn, the Forest Keeper Section and the Information Service merged to form a new section of Public Affairs under the direction of a Public Affairs

Manager, newly appointed Sally Hayns.

John Holtom became the Land Agent for the Department, with the additional responsibility for planning issues; Dr Jeremy Dagley is Forest Conservation Officer; and Ian Cox is Forest operations manager.

In addition to these internal reorganisations within the Epping Forest Department, a major restructuring within the Corporation is planned, with the appointment of a Director of Open Spaces, who will have responsibility for overall policy and will ensure closer co-operation between all of the Corporation's diverse open spaces\*.

**Tricia Moxey**

\* *The City appointed Mrs. Jenny Adams, currently with the Royal Parks, with effect from March 26th.*

## **Spring has arrived? – the vagaries of Early Spring (written March 2000)**

It all depends on where you look and which day you venture out to check on what's actually emerging from the depths of winter's torpor.

An odd and freakish sunny day will give false promise to many of our fauna sheltering from the rigours of winter in secure niches; they will rapidly react to a sudden rise in temperature and come out to enjoy the momentary and unseasonal warmth.

Adders will bask – often in collective bundles (for extra warmth) near their immediate post-hibernation spots. Butterflies that have successfully over-wintered will give us a colourful thrill and newly emergent bumble bees fresh from hibernating in their dry and warm sandy burrows will visit the first blooms to collect nectar.

Early blooms decorate the sylvan scenery. *Flames of gorse ignite amongst the damp greys and sleeping browns of the forest as it awakens. and a rebellious blackthorn in warmed and sheltered spot cascades a veritable snow-storm of delight.*

In the woods flowers that need to pollinate before the canopy shades them from essential light and warmth burst forth.

*Fresh, vibrant, green, the bluebells spike the carpet of autumnal leaves, and there is a verdant growth of Lords and Ladies, lush and heart-shaped designed by 'God' which provides refreshment amongst the debris; of the fall.*

Golden stars of early blooming celandines be-jewel the sides of the meandering brook, colts-foot enlivens barren banks – it doesn't seem to like competition and in a secretly located woodland the floor is be-decked by a very temporary carpet of delicate snowdrops.

The embryo river, the liquid border between Chingford and Loughton is rising high.

Above, in the upper echelons of the high forest, the beeches still refuse to open their buds. Cold blasts from the north-east inhibits their arousal.

Frogs, toads and newts will rapidly respond to an early spasm of warmth and immediately travel to the pond of their birth, post-haste, sensing, apparently the distinctive scent of their native water.

Leave the woods and enjoy the windswept delights of the open plain. A kestrel sits, hawk-eyed, on a bare branch and watches intently for a sign of movement in the tussocky grass. One signal and it swoops down to efficiently capture a hapless vole, its wings forwarded to

trap and confuse its prey. Above, an ascending skylark serenades and competes with the model aeroplanes. Getting scarcer due to modern farming methods Chingford Plain provides safe sanctuary.

It's now late March and the temperature's descended again to below 0°C at night and hovers at 4°C by day. Nightly frosts still emblazon the cony-cropped forest lawns.

Our summer visitors have not yet arrived and won't continue their migration 'til they sense a warmer destination. In days, the earliest of our returning feathered friends should arrive – the chiff-chaff followed by myriad others. They will cheer us up with their welcome chorus. The nightingales will return to their beloved blackthorn fringes of the forest's plains and regale the night with their haunting melody.

Then we will know Spring has truly arrived.

So, don't let Spring merge into Summer before you visit the wild woods. Don't miss the transient delights of early Spring, the fresh green colours as the leaves unfold, the early blooms – carpets of blue-bells, stocks of primroses, miniature wood violets by the brook – they all flower in the few weeks before the canopy develops in the attic of the forest and casts a cooling shade onto the floor beneath.

Too late then, Spring has flown and Summer has arrived.

**Pete Reiph**

Note: The quotes in *italic* are lines from Pete's poetry.

## Brook Road, Buckhurst Hill

Following my report in the November Newsletter about the need for a footpath on the EFDC part of this road, Verderer Richard Morris made representations to some local councillors, and it was agreed that the Transportation should look at this issue again resulting in the following Agenda item 11 for its meeting on 18 January 2001.

Recommendations:

- 1 That a 30 mph speed restriction be introduced on the section of Brook Road, Buckhurst Hill from the district boundary with the London Borough of Redbnidge, to its junction with The Cedars;
- 2 That the Head of Environmental Services be authorised to publish a draft Traffic Regulation Order introducing the restriction and, if no objections are received, to make and seal the Order in accordance with statutory regulations; and
- 3 That, subject to the consent of the Conservators of Epping Forest and to necessary funding being available from Locally Determined Budget, the provision of a walkable verge for the north side of Brook Road from The Cedars to the District boundary be investigated.

I'm glad to say that the recommendations were agreed at the Meeting, and I understand that they are 'actively seeking the necessary funding for the footpath'. Hurray and thank you Richard!

## Dumping of Used Tyres

Our thanks also to Harry Cohen M.P. for Wanstead & Leytonstone (and Friend of E.F.) for taking up the matter on his own initiative of tyre dumping in E. F. (as described in our article in the July 2000 Newsletter) with Michael Meacher Environment Minister. Harry Cohen received this reply from Patricia Hewitt Department of Trade & Industry:

*Thank you for your letter of 19 July to Michael Meacher about used tyres. I am replying in view of DTI's lead responsibility within Government for this issue.*

*The article from the Friends of Epping Forest Newsletter refers to a disposal "premium" for used tyres, which encourages fly-tipping. Clearly there are costs associated with the responsible disposal of used tyres. It is almost inevitable that a small number of individuals will seek to avoid these costs and their responsibilities by fly-tipping tyres. The Environment Agency is responsible for monitoring and enforcing waste management legislation, which governs used tyre disposal, and is acutely aware of the importance of an effective regulatory regime. The Environment Agency is currently working with DTI and the tyre industry to develop a national approach to tyre fly-tipping.*

*The EU Landfill Directive will, in due course, ban the landfilling of tyres. The Government is working with industry, through the Used Tyre Working Group, to ensure that sufficient new recovery outlets for used tyres are brought forward to deal with presently landfilled tyres. The Working Group consists of the major tyre trade associations and DTI and Environment Agency officials. A copy of the Group's latest report is attached for information (with Sec.). Currently, the UK recovers value from around 70% of the tyres disposed of each year.*

*We very much hope it will be possible to address used tyre issues voluntarily and within existing waste legislation. However, should a directed approach prove necessary this will help meet the "premium" issue by placing a statutory obligation on the tyre industry to recover used tyres.*

*I hope this is helpful, Patricia Hewitt*

## How Well Do You Know the Forest: No. 9

**Highams Park:** Four centuries ago the forest 'waste' of the Manor of Higham Benstead between Oak Hill and Chingford Hatch, was called 'Higham Bushes'. About the middle of the seventeenth century the Lord of the Manor of Higham obtained a licence to enclose (150 acres) and sell off most of the trees in a grove of the Higham Bushes afterwards known as '**The Sale**'. Later in 1790's the Lord of the Manor successfully acquired a licence to enclose most of the land from the boundary with Woodford down as far as the River Ching. This was to become the park estate of the manor house, 'Highams' (now Woodford County High School for Girls). However, objections by the Forest Court of Attachments ensured that along the western side of the estate a narrow strip of the 'waste' - a driftway - had to be left to ensure a right of way through from Walthamstow to Chingford Hatch for the deer, cattle and people. Now of course this is the strip of Forest on the western side of the Ching alongside Forest Glade and the narrow strip of woodland that links The Bridle Path near Oak Hill to the Forest west of the Lake. This piece of woodland today retains the name 'The Sale'. Buxton indicates its use as an old route by referring to it as a 'green lane'. It contains ancient Hornbeam coppice stools and some planted conifers.

When the estate was created in 1794, Humphrey Repton, the great landscape planner, suggested that what became Highams Park Lake should be constructed in the valley of the Ching and the river diverted into its present channel.

A hundred years later in 1890 the initiative of, Sir Thomas and Edward North Buxton, both then Verderers

of the Forest, ensured that the Lake, including some land, was purchased for £6000. The money being contributed by The Corporation of London, plus an amount from Woodford and Walthamstow local authorities and over one third raised by the Buxton brothers and friends. Thus in 1891 thirty acres of the Highams Park estate and the Lake, were added to the Forest and opened to the public.

Today the Lake is in a biologically 'unhealthy' state as it is very badly silted. This is soon to be cleared and remedied in two stages.

The name 'Highams Park' today is of course, the area around Highams Park Station, but in earlier times this was called Hale End - as was the original railway station.

**Woodford Green:** The name today refers to the district that has developed from the village originally called 'Woodford Row'. This was along the Woodford High Road where Mill Lane crosses into the present Johnson's Road - near the 'Castle' Hotel. 'The Green' itself is in two parts originally joined by the area in front of present day Hawkey Hall. Being part of the manorial waste, 'the Green' was retained in Epping Forest by the 1878 Act. Cricket was first played on the southern part in 1735, making it the second oldest cricket pitch in the country. The Horse Chestnut trees that line the High Road were planted in the late 1880's around the same time as the well known avenue of ('Italian') Black Poplars that had to be felled in

1966 and have now been replanted with hybrid poplars and London Plane trees.

**Woodford Golf Course, The Lops & Hatch Plain:**

The open land southwest of Sunset Avenue is nearly all within the parish boundary of Walthamstow and was part of 'Higham Bushes'. It was 'forest' or 'waste' where parishioners had rights of common. After the Epping Forest Act was passed it was retained as part of Epping Forest. Although most of the area appears to have been called '**Allen's Lops**' as early as 1641, by Buxton's time (1885) '**The Lops**' refers to the eastern part - now the **Woodford Golf Course**. On a map of c.1641 and later on another map surveyed in 1773 the area is shown as wooded, but by 1868 it appears to be open. Undoubtedly as it was wooded in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries and was part of the common waste, the name relates to the fact that the trees then would have been pollards lopped by the local commoners. Older inhabitants of Woodford Green 'village' always referred to the area as "**The Common**". This was the name used during Victorian times and no doubt even earlier.

The lower and western part of the area, down to the Ching brook is called **Hatch Plain**, after Chingford Hatch - 'hatch', is an old name meaning a gate to the Forest. Evidence of ridge and furrow can be seen in many places and these no doubt date from ploughing in the 1860's and 70's when there were also proposals to enclose the land north of 'the Common' and Hatch Plain. It was divided into fields and housing plots and bisected by several proposed roads, one was to be called 'Australia Road'. This would have been a continuation of Mornington Road - parts of this and other tracks can still be seen. Saved from becoming roads and houses by the Epping Forest Commission, the enclosures were declared illegal by the Epping Forest Act and the land was 'thrown-back' into the Forest after 1878.

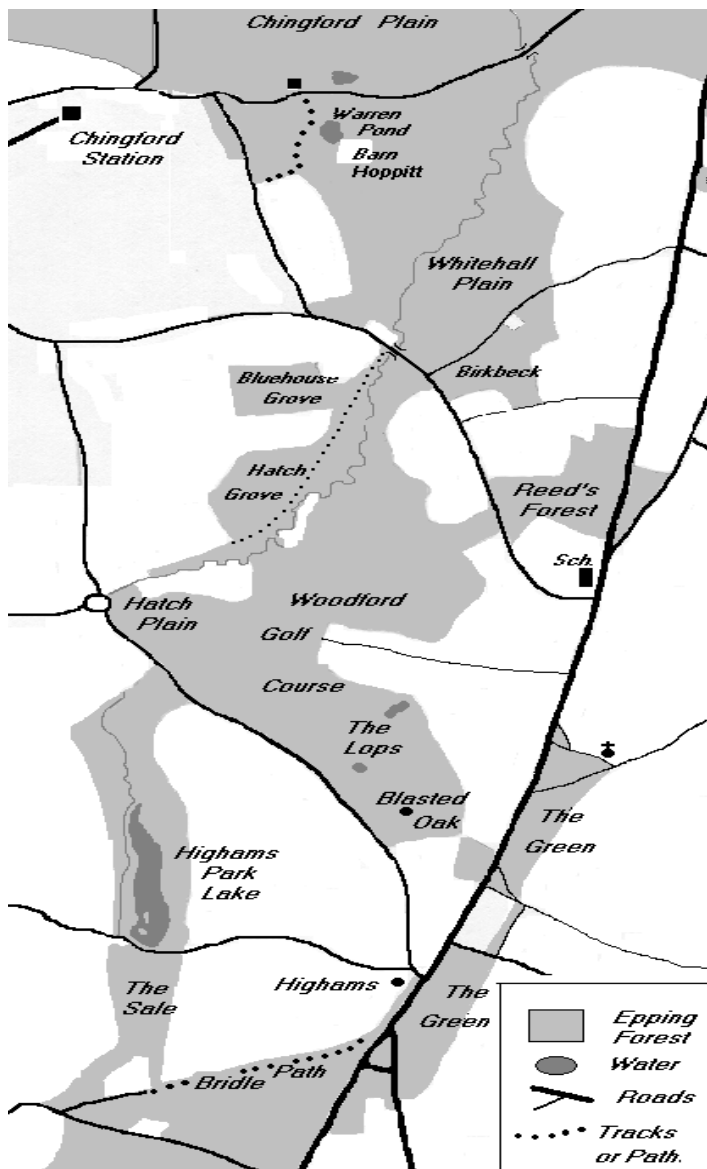
In the small copse, near Sidney Road, an old water filled gravel pit is known locally as '**The Dell**'. Another old pond called '**The Gravels**' lies in the centre of the Golf Course. Both ponds were in existence by the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century although not shown on Buxton's map (1885).

The high part of "The Common" (along Sunset Avenue) has long been famous for its sunsets and the westerly view over north London; here also the '**Blasted Oak**' is a well-known landmark. It was struck by lightning in the early 1920's

The whole area is potentially rich ecologically, the largely gravel soils having produced a heathy grassland with gorse. In recent years and particularly since the fires of 1975 & 76, oak scrub has invaded much of the grassland.

**The Ching Brook:** This is one of the main streams that drain the Forest. Its catchment area stretches from Gilwell to High Beach and Fairmead Bottom. We could assume the Ching rises from the several springs in Hill Wood south of High Beach Church. It is then joined by the drainage from Fairmead Thicks at Connaught Water and from there the overflow stream meets Cuckoo Brook which rises at Gilwell and drains the Bury Wood. Together then, The Ching becomes a substantial brook that eventually flows across Whitehall Plain, past Hatch Plain and Highams Park Lake; and then continues on into the River Lea. Like most of the Forest brooks its course is still actively changing where it runs through the Forest.

The stream has acquired its name from Chingford, rather than the reverse.



**Hatch Forest:** This is the woodland along the valley of the Ching between Chingford Hatch and Whitehall Road. That it was part of the ancient forest waste can be seen by the few old pollarded Hornbeams that it still contains. The remains of an old sewage farm are along the valley here. **The Hatch Path** borders Hatch Forest on its western side; this is really part of the ancient Forest track that was the link between the Walthamstow 'common wastes' and Chingford.

**Hatch Grove & Bluehouse Grove:** These two woods are to the west of the Ching Brook, alongside Hatch Path and between Chingford Hatch and Whitehall Road. Both woods are shown on maps to be ancient coppice woods in the early part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. At that time they were joined together and in the private ownership of the Lord of the Manor of Chingford Earls. The old boundary banks are still visible. The woods are now part of Epping Forest. The remains of the old Hornbeam coppice will be managed at intervals by re-coppicing the old stools. This is intended to increase light and regenerate the ground flora of bluebells etc.

**Whitehall Plain:** is the open part of the Forest between Whitehall Rd and Rangers Road. The Ching Brook crosses it flowing southwards.

It was originally part of the old forest waste called '**Woodford Wood**' and on a map of 1757 it is called 'Bluehouse Plain'. Woodford Wood covered over 200 acres and was to the north of Woodford Wells as far as to the Ching Brook to the west. Much of the Wood was cut down and enclosed in the first half of the nineteenth century and Whitehall Road was cut through the remaining part of the Woodford Wood in 1832. A much more ancient track crosses the plain from the east, perhaps crossing the Roding at Luxborough Lane, then along Squirrel's, Monkams and Tuttlebee Lanes. This route appears to continue over the Ching up to Dannet's Hill ('Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge') and on to Sewardstonebury and Waltham Abbey. Brook Road separates Whitehall Plain from an area called the **Birkbeck** (after a 19<sup>th</sup> century housing development company). **Brook Road** is also on the line of an older trackway, in this case from the 'Roe Buck' Inn at the top of Buckhurst Hill to Chingford. The Forest immediately west of the Ching is now sometimes referred to as **Barn Hoppitt**, 'hoppitt' meaning an enclosure. Barn Hoppitt was originally the enclosure that is now occupied by the Connaught Tennis Club.

Management work will include protection of some interesting tree and shrub species that occur along the Ching and restoration of the grassland of Whitehall Plain.

**Reed's forest:** This little patch of woodland, containing many old gravel diggings, is between Whitehall Road and the Epping New Road - behind and beside Bancroft's School. It is another relic of the old manorial Woodford Wood, as is Whitehall Plain and the Forest land north of Woodford Golf Course down to the Ching.

*Ken Hoy*

## FofEF Newsletter by e-mail

As a result of a request from a member in Australia, the FofEF Newsletter is now available by e-mail. We would like to make this service available to other members, especially those living abroad or outside the usual hand delivery teams areas.

Any **member** who wishes to receive their Newsletter by e-mail, should contact the membership secretary at

the address below (don't forget to supply your current e-mail address). It will be the responsibility of members using this service to notify us of any change of e-mail address.

The Newsletter will be sent out as a .PDF e-mail file attachment. To view and print the newsletter you will need to have a copy of Adobe Acrobat Reader software on your computer. This is available free on the Internet from: <http://www.adobe.co.uk> or <http://www.adobe.com> When the web page opens "Click" on the "Get Acrobat Reader" button. Downloading onto your computer takes several minutes.

Instructions for converting the .PDF file into a readable and printable form of the Newsletter will be provided for inexperienced computer users.

Seymour Moss, 47 Long Deacon Road, Chingford, London, E4 6EG, England or [seymour@moss40.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:seymour@moss40.freeserve.co.uk)

## William Chapman Waller 1850-1917

Verderer Richard Morris has recently published a biography of William Chapman Waller - Loughton's Historian. The book traces Waller's life at Ash Green in Loughton overlooking the Forest. Between 1890-1900 Waller wrote the definitive history of Loughton, which was first published by instalments in the Parish Magazine and subsequently bound into a book.

Waller was a leading member of the Essex Field Club and contributed many articles to the Essex Naturalist on the history of Epping Forest. He was not averse to criticising the management of the Forest and on one occasion argued vehemently that the Clay Ride should be obliterated and returned to the Forest.

As an antiquarian and historian Waller researched the history of Loughton and Essex and was renowned for the painstaking detail of his work on the old Court Rolls and Charters. The results of his research were published in the Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society and the Essex Review.

Apart from his involvement with the Parish Church and Vestry, Waller participated actively in the local community. He was a JP sitting at Epping, President of the Loughton Mutual Labour-Aid Society and Chairman of the Loughton Horticultural Society. When Lopping Hall was opened in 1884 Waller was its first librarian, a post he held for 10 years.

Waller was a very keen supporter of the Forest and his descendants still have many of his diaries in which he faithfully recorded his walks and bicycle rides throughout the area. He also wrote an itinerary of Loughton between 1905-1912 in which he perambulates the Parish commenting on the buildings and the people living in them. This provides an invaluable social history of the village at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The book by Richard Morris quotes extensively from Waller's work and assesses his contribution to recording the history of Loughton and Essex. The book has many old photographs and drawings of Loughton and Epping Forest, some of which have not previously been published.

The book can be obtained from the Loughton & District Historical Society, 7 Staples Road, Loughton, IG10 1HP, and at local bookshops, price £7.50

*Editor*

## Managing the Forest

Whilst it would be nice to write an article about managing the Forest which doesn't mention the terrible weather we have been having, the very high rainfall is undoubtedly having an impact on our works programme at a very important time in the Forest management calendar. There are a few tasks, such as pond and stream clearance work, which have had to be postponed along with some of the coppicing and scrub clearance works planned for this time of year. Despite this the Forest Operations team have done an excellent job in carrying out a lot of the planned work programme, often showing ingenuity and resilience in the face of interminably soggy ground conditions!

One of the highlights of the recent months has been the first phase of the grassland restoration project carried out by contractors at Yardley Hill. This has involved clearing some of the scrub by pulling it out with a tracked digger rather than by cutting it or using chemicals. Two hectares have been cleared although some of the older thorns, bramble scrub and rosehips have been left behind because they are an important habitat for rare moths. The existing flower-rich grassland was carefully circumvented and this will now be one of the seed sources for re-establishing the grassy slopes for which Yardley Hill was once renowned.

It looks very bare at the moment but as soon as conditions allow we will use a disc-harrow to break up the soil and allow the grassland to develop. As well as opening up the view and restoring the old diagonal path across the hill we have also opened up a 100 metre section of the London Loop walk on the eastern side of Yardley Hill. The contractor did an excellent job in accessing the site very carefully to avoid trees and anthills and we are delighted with the result so far. It is worth noting that we will be returning to Yardley Hill later this year to restore the 360° view at the top.

Fewer trees have been pollarded than in previous years due to the weather but we have been able to make a big difference to Gilberts Slade and the Jubilee Lodge area of Bury Wood. The pollarding has been done very carefully, tree by tree, with records kept of the location and nature of each tree before it is cut. The effect has been to open up the rides and pathways and allow dappled sunlight onto the areas. Taking the weight from these old pollards, many of which were leaning or had limbs in precarious positions, should ensure they remain standing and grow anew.

Even fewer trees will be pollarded next year, partly to allow other work to be done but also to enable us to review our older trees and how to protect them in the future – a point very well made by Ken in 'Natural Aspects'. Most of the pollarding that does take place next year will be maiden pollarding, together with clearance work around some of the old oak trees to open them up from competition for light and nutrients.

As Ken also mentions, many of our older Beech trees in the northern part of the Forest are coming towards the end of their life span and have suffered from many 'dry' summers so we will be looking at ways that we can protect and preserve some of them in the coming years.

Another pleasing result has been the continued development of Strawberry Hill Pond after the major restoration work that took place in 1999. This was the first pond to be tackled on such a major scale and it really is well worth a visit. Some other pond work is

planned, if funding allows, along the same lines as the approach used here although we have not yet decided where. The possible sites include Goldings Hill (Outer) Pond and work there would be phased in such a way to keep rare plants such as Bogbean. We would, of course, carry out the work with due regard to the history of the area and would seek to re-open the old cart track.

One pond that will definitely be getting a facelift is the Model Yacht Pond at Wanstead Flats. This pond, which has been dry for a very long time (but, as I write, is overflowing with water onto the surrounding roads) will be cleared out in the early part of 2002 and re-modelled into a 'wildlife' pond with facilities for educational work for local schools. Over the coming months we will be consulting with local residents about the design for the pond and we look forward to working closely with a local group of volunteers to ensure the improvements to the area are maintained in years to come. The views of the Friends would, of course, be very welcome.

Other priorities over the next few months will include improvement works to green lanes to make them more accessible and more interesting. We have started this work at Organ and Mayes Lanes in Chingford where sycamore clearance has already taken place and these much neglected green lanes on the Forest fringe should eventually be used regularly again. When work is completed we hope to involve local people and youth groups in helping to keep the paths open for everyone to enjoy.

We are also putting in a major effort to get a number of our heathlands back in good condition through scrub tree clearance and the creation of scrapes in some places to reveal the buried seed-bank of Heather. The heathlands of Epping Forest are an important part of our Special Area of Conservation (SAC) candidate status. If we achieve SAC status it will raise the profile of Epping Forest and help to make its conservation importance more widely recognised. The criteria for Epping Forest's SAC status have been recently revised and although the boundary area remains the same English Nature has recognised that one of the essential attributes of the Forest is the importance of its ancient heaths. They are an integral part of the Forest fabric and it's excellent news that their value has been recognised in this way.

Grasslands are also being restored and our priority here is to target those areas which also restore some of the superb views that are being, or have been, lost. Mention has already been made of Yardley Hill but other sites in our plans this year include Baldwins Hill, Pole Hill, Woodbury Hollow and Woodford Golf Course.

Finally, we are trying to develop 'integrated site-plans' for specific areas of the Forest where balancing the needs of nature conservation, access and recreation needs a comprehensive and well thought out strategy. We have already begun the very first stages of drafting an integrated site plan for Connaught Water and other areas to be looked at this year include Knighton Woods and Lords Bushes. Consultation on people's views is extremely important and we very much hope that many of you will feel able to comment on our draft plans when they are produced. Watch this space!

***Dr Jeremy Dagley, Forest Conservation Officer***

Hope you can join us on some of the summer walks and visit our stall at some of the fêtes and festivals.

***Ed.***

## Dates for your Diary

**March 29th Thursday 10.30 am.** A walk around the area of Highams Park Lake. Meet at the Wheelwrights PH at the junction of Friday Hill, Chingford Lane and Hatch Lane. (car parking at the pub or near-by in the street. Buses 212 and 357 pass the door and 2 mins walk away the 275 stops in the Avenue, Chingford Lane end.

**Leader: Irene Buchan, GR 391 928**

**April 29th Sunday 10.30 am.** Meandering along Loughton Brook. A walk taking in the recently de-silted Strawberry Hill and Baldwins Ponds and maybe even the Lost Pond! Meet in the car-park in Nursery Road (off Smarts Lane) Loughton. (Loughton Central Line Station 10 mins walk).

**Leader: Verderer Richard Morris, GR 418 965**

**April 30th Mon 7.3 pm.** AGM and illustrated talk by Peter Adams at the Sir James Hawkey Hall, Broomhill Road, (off Broadmead Road) Woodford Green, Agenda enclosed.

**GR 402 918**

**May 24th Thursday 10.30 am.** A walk around **inside** the City of London Cemetary looking for unusual trees and memorials and maybe the 'odd' bird. You may wish to adjourn to the nearby Golden Fleece P.H. for lunch afterwards. Meet in the small car park outside the main gates in Aldersbrook Road, Manor Park E.12. 101 bus from Wanstead passes the gates, and Manor Park Station is a 5 minute walk away.

**Leader Alan Everitt, GR 417 864**

**June 23rd Saturday 7.30 pm.**

A midsummer's evening walk to take a look at the recently cleared Yardley Hill, and a visit to Hawkwood Lodge Field Study Centre to its pond. Meet in Hornbeam Lane, Bury Road, Chingford E.4.

**Leader Peter Read, GR 393 957**

**June 30th Saturday** Chingford Village Festival. Flower festival, strawberry fair and 12 hours of live music. There will be a large marquee on the green, in the case of a repeat of last year's weather! And the Friends will be there with stall and exhibition in our own gazebo. Any help welcomed! (I **will** contact those who offered after the plea in the last Newsletter.)

**GR 386 944**

**July 20th Friday 10.30 am.** Walk around the Copped Hall area. Meet in the Lodge Road car park. Travelling north-east on the B1393 take the first turning on the left after the Wake Arms roundabout.

**Leader Ken Hoy, GR 432 998**

Walks last about 2 hours. Please come suitably dressed for walking in the forest, which can be very wet and muddy. For help in getting to the meeting points please contact H & P Bitten on 020 8529 8594.

## Advance Notice

**August 17th Friday 11 am.** Walk on green lanes in the Aimes Green area.

**September 9th Sunday.** Forest Festival at the Queen Elizabeth Hunting Lodge.

**September 23rd Sunday.** Centenary all-day walk from Manor Park to Epping.

**November 23rd Friday** FOREST SUPPER

## Other Dates

March 15<sup>th</sup> Thursday 10.00 – 3.30 Essex Sea Defences Seminar to explain the options of sea defence along the Essex Coast. The Wardroom, Essex Marina, Wallasea Island organised by CPR Essex. Tickets; £18 (inc. lunch and tea). Apply to: Mrs V Stanton 01702 258380

### EF Information and Museum Service

EF Lecture 1st March Thursday. International Conservation Issues – A South African Perspective. Nick Eade

Sunday 11 March Walk along the Western Heights

Leader: Jeff Seddon. Meet in Bury Road Car Park,

Chingford. [GR 393 953]. Bookings and further details: The Epping Forest Information Centre, High Beach. Tel: 020 8508 0028/8508 2266

### EF Conservation Volunteers Programme

March 4th – Hatgate Plain, March 18th – Eppmng Thicks, March 25th – Gernon Bushes, Tuesday March 27th – Pole Hill, April 1st – Waithanistow Forest, April 15th – Chingford Lane I Lichfield Road, April 29th – Brickyard Pond, May 6th – Walthamstow Forest, May 20th – Cuckoo Brook. May 27th – Duismead Bog

Meet at the Warren at 9.30am off Warren Hill, Loughton. and return at about 3.30pm. For further information call Derek Meakin (020 8500 1571) or Alan Bertram (020 8559 2300).

### Essex Wildlife Trust, Epping Forest Group

Saturday 10 March, Short all day walk at Thorndon Country Park. Meet at Thorndon Countryside Centre at 10:30pm (GR TQ 606915) or at the Hawkey Hall, Woodford for shared transport. at 9:30am

Thursday 29 March The Lost World, a talk by Dr. Peter Brandham (Consultant at Kew). Touring the rain forest of Guyana, up to Mount Roraima, hunting rare and exotic plants. Meet at the Methodist Church Hall High Road, Loughton at 8pm AGM at 7:45pm.

Tuesday 3 April WANSTEAD PARK, RIVER RODING AND MORE A walk around Wanstead. Meet at Capel Road, Manor Park, E12 near the Golden Fleece PH at 10:30am

Sunday 22 April, Ambresbury Banks and Shepherds Madow. Morning walk. Meet at Epping Station at 10:30 am.

Sunday 13 May, Warley Place Nature Reserve, A walk looking for spring flowers.

Meet EWT car park (adjacent to Thatchers Arms Public House on B186, GR TQ 583906) at 10:30am

### EF Centenery Trust

Sunday – 4th March, Spring Colour Photography  
Monday – 19th March 7am Dawn, Deer and Breakfast,  
Sunday – 8th April, Gardening For Wildlife  
Saturday – 26th May, Cycle Fever

(Meet at the Warren, for more info call 8508 9061)

### Friends of Suntrap and Hawkwood Lodge

March 25th Sunday (Mothering Sunday) Inaugural AGM 2.00–5.00 at Suntrap, Church Road, High Beach. Children's activities throughout the Afternoon—bring all the family for tea and cakes.

### STOP PRESS

Because of the Foot and Mouth outbreak, the Conservators have decided to close the Forest north of a line from Woodridden Hill to Goldings Hill. Any extension of the ban could affect our walks programme, so please check on (020) 8529 8594 or (020) 8529 0620 before each walk.

# THE FRIENDS OF EPPING FOREST

## NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND FORM OF NOMINATION FOR OFFICE HOLDERS THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

will be held on **Monday 30th April 2001**  
at the Sir James **Hawkey Hall, Woodford Green at 7.30pm**

### Agenda for A.G.M

1. Minutes of the last AGM held on 22nd May, 2000
2. Matters Arising
3. Chairman's Report 2000/2001
4. Treasurer's Report
5. Election of the Vice Chairman and Hon. Memb. Sec.
6. Election of Committee Members
7. Election of Independent Examiner
8. Any Other Business

After the meeting and a break for coffee there will be an illustrated talk by Peter Adams, Verderer of EF and trustee of the Waltham Abbey Royal Gunpowder Mills.

### Officers at present are:

**Chairman:** Ken Hoy due for re-election in 2003

**Vice-Chairman:** Sue McKinley due for re-election this year

**Hon. General Sec:** Mrs. Peggy Bitten due for re-election in 2002

**Hon. Treasurer:** Tony Sheppard due for re-election in 2002

**Hon. Membership Sec:** Seymour Moss due for re-election this year

**Existing Committee members willing to stand are:** Harry Bitten, Irene Buchan, John Buchan, Bill Dexter, Jim Gimson, Robert Levene (co-opted), Sue McKinley, Derek Meakin, Peter Read and Joy Smith.

Committee members are re-elected each year and those listed above have agreed to stand. If you wish to submit nominations for the post of Vice Chairman and Hon. Membership Sec. or Committee members, please complete the form below and send it to: Mrs. P. Bitten, 9 Frederica Road, Chingford E4 7AL by 6th April 2001.

## THE FRIENDS OF EPPING FOREST - NOMINATION FORM

**I nominate for the office of Vice Chairman, Hon. Membership Sec. or Committee member**

*(Please delete as appropriate)*

Name .....

Address .....

.....

.....

Tel: .....

Signature of Candidate .....

Signature of Proposer ..... Tel: .....

Name In Capitals .....

Signature of Seconder ..... Tel: .....

Name in capitals .....

If you wish to nominate for more than one office, please write details as above on a separate sheet.



## **MINUTES of the 2000 Annual General Meeting of The Friends of Epping Forest held at the Sir James Hawkey Hall on Monday 22nd May 2000 at 7.30pm**

**PRESENT:** Committee Members. K.Hoy Chairman, Mrs.P.Bitten Secretary, T.Sheppard Treasurer, S.Moss Membership Secretary, H. Bitten, Mrs.I .Buchan, J.Buchan, E .Cropper, B.Dexter, C.Cimson, W.Flumphreys, Mrs. 5.MkKinley, Mrs.J.Miller, Mrs.3.Smith and D.Meekin co-Opted.

80 members were present.

APOLOGIES were received from Dr. & Mrs. F.Middlemiss, Irene and Len Harris, Mr. & Mrs. J.Nicholson.

1. **THE MINUTES** of the last meeting held on Monday 26th April 1999 were approved after final paragraph was added, and signed.

2. **MATTERS ARISING** there were none.

3. **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 1999/2000**

A copy of the Report will be enclosed with the July Newsletter. Adoption of the Report was proposed by R.Wortley, seconded by S.Moss and carried unanimously. Comments were made from the floor on traffic flows on Forest roads and how these might be affected by fencing or free ranging cattle, especially in view of the recent horse deaths.

4. **TREASURER'S REPORT**

Mr. Sheppard explained his Receipts and Payments Account from 1.4.99 to 31.3.00 making it "understandable to non-accountants". Low interest rates were a reason for concern and some money will be moved from Barclays to achieve a higher rate. Acceptance of the Report was proposed by H.Bitten and seconded by W. Humphreys.

The need to increase membership fees which had been the same for 10 years was put to the meeting. Of 1264 addresses 1082 are life members. A motion to increase fees to Life £30, 3 year £12 and Annual £5 with 50% reduction for Senior Citizens was proposed by E.Cropper, seconded by H.Bitten and carried unanimously. Suggestions from the floor to increase revenue included holding raffles on other occasions than the Forest Supper and taking a collection from regular walks and meetings.

5. **ELECTION OF THE CHAIRMAN**

There had been no other nominations and Mr. Hoy was re-elected unanimously.

6. **ELECTION OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

There had been no other nominations and the committee was re-elected en bloc with the addition of co-opted member Mr. Derek Meakin who represents the Conservation Volunteers. A volunteer to take over the position of minuting secretary would be appreciated.

7. **ELECTION OF AUDITOR**

Sadly Mr. French had died. Mr. Peter Gotham had volunteered to become Independent Examiner. His election was proposed by E.Cropper, seconded by H.Bitten and carried unanimously.

8. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

A booklet of the Commoners' Appeal 1893, was on sale.

After closure of the meeting and a break for coffee Mr. Ted Green of Windsor Great Park gave a thought provoking illustrated talk on "Epping Forest's Ancient Trees. The Jewel of Europe", which was enthusiastically received.