

Friends of Epping Forest

Newsletter Spring 2013

www.friendsofeppingforest.org.uk



GIFFORD WOOD – TREE PLANTING APPEAL

In our last newsletter, we celebrated the purchase of new land at Upshire, which has now been added to Epping Forest. The Friends are already involved and are keen to help support the planting up of Gifford Wood on about a third of the site.

As part of the Lord Mayor's Appeal 2013, an Appeal has been started to plant up 4,500 trees – native oak and hornbeam and some pioneer species more tolerant of projected changes in climate. These new trees will potentially create a seed bank to secure the Wood for the future. The Appeal was launched at the Lord Mayor's Show in November 2012 – you may have seen the jolly green Epping Forest giant if you were there!

How can you get involved?

Come and visit the new land on Saturday 27 April at 11:00am, join a short guided walk to look at the site and view the plan. Meet in Upshire Village Hall car park, Horseshoe Hill, Upshire. EN9 3SP (Grid Ref: TL 416 011)

Or try out the longer walk described in this year's spring edition of *Forest Focus*. Download it at www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/green-spaces/epping-forest/news/Documents/epping-forest-focus-newsletter-spring-2013.pdf

Donate to the Gifford Wood Appeal

Cheque: Please make payable to 'The Lord Mayor's Appeal 2013' and post it/deliver it to Friends of Epping Forest, 2 High View Close, Loughton, Essex IG10 4EG.

Online: www.justgiving.com/thelordmayorsappeal/donate. Be sure to mention that you are a member of the Friends of Epping Forest in the notes box. This will help us to track the level of financial support from members of the Friends of Epping Forest. We are keen to do this, so we may be able to hand over a 'cheque' at the Lord Mayor's Tree Party!

Tree planting – November 2013

We are working with the officers at the City of London on a tree planting event, and we'll need your help. The date is to be confirmed, but will appear on our website and in the next *Newsletter*. Hope you will be able to join in!

Fancy a quiz? – 14 June 2013

The Friends will be running a quiz night at the Upshire Village Hall on 14 June 2013, beginning at 7:00 pm, to raise money for



23 January 2013 – the work begins: Lord Mayor Roger Gifford and Lady Mayoress Clare Gifford plant one of the first new trees on the newly designated Epping Forest Land.

the Appeal. Tables of eight will be available. General questions along with a few Epping Forest 'specials'. Charge £9.50 per person. Fish and chips, chicken and chips or vegetarian option included, along with soft drinks. Bring your own wine/beer if you wish. Try your hand at winning and make money for the Gifford Wood Appeal at the same time. Send cheques (made out to Friends of Epping Forest) to Judy Adams, 2 High View Close, Loughton, Essex IG10 4EG. Tel 020 8418 0730 or email judith.adams21@btinternet.com for further details.

Lord Mayor's Tree Party – 25 June 2013

Why not attend the Lord Mayor's Tree Party, from 6:30pm until 10:30pm at Mansion House? Tickets £80 per person or £150 a couple, but Members of the Friends of Epping Forest pay just £60 per person and can have up to five guests at this reduced rate. Bring friends and make a night of it at this special evening of entertainment hosted by the Lord Mayor! A celebratory tree-themed evening of champagne, canapés, music and theatre with performers from the City of London and Epping Forest, and displays from the City's Wood Livery Companies.

For further information or to book tickets, please go to www.thelordmayorsappeal.org/event/lord-mayors-tree-party, telephone the Appeal Team on 020 7246 4021 or email cat.stirling@citymusicfoundation.org. To check your membership number, contact Jean Brockington (jean.brockington@btopenworld.com or phone 020 8529 3077).

Judy Adams

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The Friends is a Registered Charity No: 299970.
Committee Members are the Trustees of the Charity.

Views and opinions expressed in this Newsletter are not necessarily those of the Friends of Epping Forest Committee.

Dear Friend...

I am sure you will be pleased to hear that Mike Smith has offered to be Secretary of the Friends and has now been co-opted by the Committee. After over a nine-month vacancy, his support is very welcome. His charity and financial experience, knowledge of the Forest and his interest in wildlife are of great value. In addition, his extensive committee experience with the Friends and through his previous work experience, largely with local authorities, will be particularly useful to our development.

This is also the first issue which has been edited and produced by Pete Wrobel. He has worked in publishing since 1973, primarily in magazines including *New Scientist* and latterly as Managing Editor of the journal *Nature*, along with some freelance work including newsletters. He walks and cycles in the Forest, lives local to the Forest and 'knows and loves it'. He will be supported by the Editorial Committee including him, the Chairman, Vice Chairman and Treasurer.

You will appreciate that Pete will work in both the historic 'Peg role' (Editor) and the 'Ron role' (Typesetting). This means that Ron Clayton will no longer be continuing to work on the *Newsletter*. He has been typesetter for thirteen years, has developed the *Newsletter* as is well illustrated by the photos below and has met many of our other typesetting needs, including the Supper invitations. I would like to thank Ron on behalf of the Committee and all of you who have enjoyed the newsletter over the years. His very good support has been of great value to the Friends over these many years.



From the early days to now. Many thanks to Ron Clayton, who brought colour and a flair for design to the Newsletter.

You will note from the AGM agenda later in the *Newsletter* that Ken Hoy is proposed as Vice President. Ken has decided to retire from the Committee and this seems a good way to continue his involvement with the Friends. It will enable us to continue to draw on his experience and knowledge of the Forest.

You will also note that our AGM is a little later this year, allowing us to complete the Annual Report and Accounts for the AGM. We are very pleased that Paul Thomson, Superintendent of Epping Forest, has agreed to speak at that meeting. I look forward to seeing you there.

Judy Adams

NATURAL ASPECT

In 1976, the Friends published the first issue of our enlarged *Newsletter*. It was 13 years later that I wrote the first Natural Aspect. Since then I have written this feature regularly for three seasons of each year. That is 72 times! In many of those issues, I found it necessary to begin by saying something about the effects of the weather on the Forest. It is difficult to ignore it. This last year, you will recall it was very dry at the beginning and very wet by the end. We all know how unseasonal was the summer that came in between.

All through that period the effects of the weather are dominant...the dry, drought conditions with fires, contrasting with excessive wet seasons, the cold summers and mild winters – emphasising the snow in the years when we had any – and records were broken. In the short term, the effects of weather on the Forest's appearance are soon 'healed' and appear to balance out, but in the long term, as is now widely recognised, the overall trend has been towards more extreme conditions.



Fire at Whitehouse Plain, 1976. Photo: Ken Hoy

Some of these extremes were memorable – the great wind storm of October 1987 that was said to happen once in 200 years re-occurred in January 1991. Five days after the 1987 storm we said in our *Newsletter* (Oct 1987) that we disagreed with the general view that the storm was a great disaster for the Forest: we believed sunny glades and greater diversity would soon result. Five years later, experts declared that this in fact had happened, and on balance the subsequent changes were for the better. I see that we congratulated the Forest's staff on the swift and efficient way that they had cleared the many fallen roadside trees and elsewhere left the debris to decay safely and



Violent summer storms have led to flash floods. Photo: Ken Hoy



Storm damage in beech woodland, 1987: by no means a disaster for the Forest. Photo: Peter Adams

naturally. The excessive cleaning up that happened in many other places was later admitted to have been wrong.

On another occasion a violent summer storm and the sudden rise of Staples Brook caused flooding in parts of Loughton. There were hysterical calls for the Forest's streams to be cleaned out. Although this would have accentuated the problem and speed of the flash flooding, the Conservators were thoughtlessly blamed for neglecting the streams! There were official suggestions that a large dam be built halfway up the valley of the stream. We strongly supported the Conservators when they resisted this suggestion and we welcomed the alternative solution of holding back more water at Staples Pond.

What changes did we notice in the Forest's wildlife? Most startling was, and is, the continuing marked decrease in bird and insect life in the Forest.

The decrease or loss of many songbirds – garden warblers, blackcaps, whitethroats, willow and wood warblers and nightingales – and other longer-term losses such as redstarts, tree pipits, nuthatches, marsh tits...all these losses have continued. Walking through the Forest outside the breeding season, we would meet, every quarter mile or so, a large mixed flock of tits moving through the woodland. No longer does this happen, however. Nor do flocks of greenfinches, chaffinches and often bramblings rise in front of you.

Noticeable also is the reduction in the numbers of many butterflies. While the loss of bees and other pollinating insects is now national news, think about the flat white heads of the parsley family of flowers – the cow parsley and particularly the hogweed. They always used to have an interesting mixture of insects feeding upon them. Look during this coming year – you will be lucky to find any. Less frequently do we see the burnished bronze-green longhorned moths swarming around the young growth on oaks and hawthorns or the hairy black St Mark's flies.

These are just some of the changes that I began to recognise when I looked through these old Natural Aspects. A variation of habitat, growth and cover is essential for many of the birds and insects we have lost...and for blackberry-and-apple pies too!

Ken Hoy

LOOK OUT FOR ASH DIEBACK

Within Epping Forest, ash is by no means the commonest tree, but in some areas it can be seen in fairly large numbers. So the ash disease, which has received so much publicity in recent months, is a serious cause for concern – albeit there have not yet been any reported cases in the Forest.

The disease is caused by a fungus (*Chalara fraxinea*) which attacks the young shoots and leaves of the tree. Once established it spreads up the mid-rib of the leaf into the twig. Frequently the infection stops where the twig joins a branch. But sometimes the fungus continues growing into the branches, the stem/trunk, even the roots, resulting in the death of the whole tree. Younger trees are most vulnerable and invariably die following infection.

Like so many plant diseases and pests that have come to our attention in recent years, this one seems to have spread from outside Europe. Plant material and young plants have been moved extensively around Britain and Europe, so any infection can be rapidly spread. Any resistance to the diseases that may have developed in the country of origin is unlikely to be present within the local area of planting. This all means that there are real risks that have to be assessed when woodlands are being re-created by plantations rather than through the process of natural regeneration.

Signs of the disease. The effects of the disease are easiest to identify at the latter part of their active growing phase, while there are still leaves on the tree. But some signs can be seen at any time of year. The disease works by cutting off the water supply to the leaf or young shoot and then spreading down the vessels within the plant through which the water would normally come. The leaf and shoots wilt and die with the mid-rib, and in due course the twigs turn black.

If the disease does not progress, the tree will often show bushy growth further back on the branches. Where there is a dead side shoot, a characteristic purple or black diamond-shaped lesion will develop around the base of the shoot.



Affected stem with characteristic purple lesion. Photo Clive Brasier, courtesy Forestry Commission. Crown Copyright.

Dead branches are also an indication that closer investigation should be carried out. If an infected branch is cut open, the underlying wood is usually darkly stained. Nevertheless we certainly do not want people to go round cutting pieces off our ash trees.



Affected leaves wilt, then die. Photo courtesy Forestry Commission. Crown Copyright.

What can be done about this disease? Sadly there is no known cure or effective treatment. In the case of an isolated tree in your garden, it might be possible to delay infection by clearing up the leaves as they fall and bury them, burn them, or compost them in an enclosed bin. In the context of the Forest this is clearly impossible and so we can only monitor the situation closely. If you see any signs in the Forest that match those set out above, you should advise the Conservators' staff at The Warren.

In the context of the country as a whole, the situation is also being carefully monitored to learn about the way the disease spreads and to identify possible improved management. To find appropriate breeding stock for the future, any ash trees that seem to be immune to the disease will also be identified. In the latest edition of *British Wildlife* magazine, Sue Everett reports that scientists plan to decode the entire genetic sequence of the European ash with the aim of finding genes encoding for resistance to this disease. This information, along with field trials, will be used to develop a breeding programme for disease-resistant trees. The researchers expect to have a first draft of the tree's genome by August 2013. Science is moving at a pace that could scarcely be dreamed of a generation ago.

For more information see the Forestry Commission's website, including a good video of how to look for symptoms: www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/INFD-92AHUK.

Peter Adams

QR code – from phone to web

If you have a smart phone and can scan a QR code with its camera, either with an application that you download or via software that's already installed, scan this QR code and go to the Friends of Epping Forest website.



FOREST MATTERS

Election of Forest Verderers



Re-elected, the Forest Verderers (left to right): Richard Morris, Peter Adams, Jo Thomas and Michael Chapman

In late February, the nomination meetings took place for the four posts of Verderer of Epping Forest. As no one else stood, the four current Verderers were returned unopposed for a further seven years. The Friends look forward to continuing our excellent working relationship with them.

The office of Verderer was first introduced almost 1,000 years ago by early medieval kings. Verderers administered the Forest Law over the 60 Royal Forests. The Verderers protected the 'vert' (all the vegetation in the forest) and the 'venison' (the hunting animals, principally deer and wild boar which relied on the forest).

Today the post of Verderer continues, enshrined in the Epping Forest Act 1878. While they no longer administer the courts, they are members of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee, which is responsible for the management of Epping Forest. As the local members of this Committee, they have a greater knowledge of the Forest, the communities surrounding it and the many matters relating to the Forest's management. This voluntary, unpaid position is a demanding one and their commitment is evidenced by the respect in which they are held by the rest of the Committee.

For more details about them, along with their contact details, see www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/green-spaces/epping-forest/about-us/Pages/Verderers.aspx

Knolly's Nursery site, Waltham Abbey

The Friends of Epping Forest objected (as did the Corporation of London) to a planning application for 115 dwellings at the Knolly's Nursery site in Waltham Abbey. The proposed site is in the Green Belt, separated from Pick Lane by a strip of Forest land along the side of that road.

Fortunately the application has been turned down by Epping Forest District Council, though one imagines that the applicant may appeal against the decision or submit a further proposal.

Coppice Row Farm, Theydon Bois

While this proposal was for an eco-friendly house, it too was in the Green Belt. Following our objection and others, it has been turned down.

Grazing Expansion Plan for Implementing the Epping Forest Grazing Strategy

At its February meeting, the Epping Forest and Commons Committee agreed the Grazing Expansion Plan to establish a breeding herd at Great Gregories Farm, enabling the Conservators to bring the cattle numbers on the Forest up to 150, as already approved in the Grazing Strategy.

The area from Chingford Plain to Woodredon Hill (totalling 700 hectares), as previously agreed, is to be grazed. The cattle grids are due to be installed during March and fencing along the A104 and Woodredon Hill will follow. The Plan includes expanded facilities at Great Gregories to house animals in winter.

The documents that went to the meeting are to be available shortly, following the removal of commercially sensitive information.

High Beach Visitor Centre

The High Beach Visitor Centre is now open only at weekends. In December, a tendering process was undertaken, seeking expressions of interest from organisations to run the building primarily as a café from 1 April. The results of this process are not yet confirmed.

The Friends Committee had examined the tender documentation, but given that the requirement was to run it first and foremost as a café, we did not express an interest. However, we continue to maintain an interest in the future of this building, and in particular the role it could play in providing information and how the Friends might play a part in that provision.

Epping Forest Events Diary 2013

If you have not collected yours, this year's Events Diary is available at the View at Chingford, the Temple in Wanstead or at High Beach Visitor Centre (weekends only). You will find all our events in there, along with those run by the City of London and a number of other providers. There is no shortage of things to do! You can also download the 2013 Events Diary from www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/green-spaces/epping-forest/sports-events-and-activities/Pages/eppingevents.aspx.

Epping Forest Management Plan

As you will know, a new 10-year plan for Epping Forest is in preparation. It is likely that consultation on the first phase will take place during the summer of 2013, so that should mean we can feature more detail in the next *Newsletter*.

Looking ahead, you will be able to access information about this online at www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/eppingforestconsult.

FRIENDS MATTERS

Forest Supper 2013

The Forest Supper is on Thursday 21 November 2013. So glad rags out again! The venue will be Hawkey Hall and we'll be working with Alan Beere Catering as last year. Please save the date! Applications in the next *Newsletter*.

Looking forward to the summer?

We have now booked five fairs and fetes this summer, but they will not happen without you. So if you are packed with enthusiasm about Epping Forest and have a good working knowledge of the Forest, are keen to share it and enjoy meeting people, this could be your way of getting more involved with the Friends.

And correspond!

It would really help us, and you, if you would let us have your email address if you have one. We won't send you your newsletter by email if you don't want that, but it would mean we could update you with what is going on a little more frequently.

And if there is an event coming up, we could let you know. At the moment, we tend to have to wait until the next *Newsletter*, by which time it may be too late.

Give it some thought – help us help you! Send your email address to: Jean.brockington@btopenworld.com

HELPING HANDS NEEDED

Fairs and Fetes

Please see if you can manage one (or more) of these dates:

Saturday 29 June Epping Festival

Sunday 7 July Epping Show Sunday

Saturday 17 August Working Woodland Day at Epping Forest Burial Park

Saturday 7 September High Beach Festival (see also page 9)

And of course, help with our annual Centenary Walk on **Sunday 15 September**.

And there may be more! If you are interested, give Judy Adams a ring on 020 8418 0730 or email Judith.adams21@btinternet.com.

Any keen communicators out there?

The Friends need to do a little more promotion, better present ourselves, look at new media, and produce a few leaflets and more. If anyone has some time to share with us, you would be most welcome.

FOREST QUIZ

If you found this footprint in the recent snow ... what was it that passed that way? Answer in next issue.



CUCKOO WATCH

You will recall last summer that several additional cuckoos were radio tagged. Eventually some of them and some previously tagged birds (2011) transmitted, showing that they had arrived in the equatorial rainforests of the Congo, just where the cuckoos wintered in 2011/2012.

Very bad weather last spring and summer meant not only that there were losses on their northward migration back to the UK in the spring, but also that there were losses during the return migration to Africa last summer (possibly not enough fat reserves had been accumulated to provide the strength to make the long journey back).

The latest news (end of February) is that some of those that did survive have already begun to return northwards out of central Africa.

Remember 'Chris', the one tagged in June 2011, which first stopped on his return journey back to England on 1 May 2012? He transmitted from somewhere just east of Epping on his way back to Norfolk. Now, he has once more wintered in Africa and no doubt will soon start back again for Norfolk. We can rarely expect to hear a cuckoo calling much before the third week of April...let's hope it is 'Chris' again, successfully transmitting during his third (at least) summer as an adult.

(More news in the summer *Newsletter*, with thanks to the BTO.)

Ken Hoy

WALK REPORTS

Gernon Bushes for fruits and fungi (21 October 2012)

On a rather grey morning, a group of 12 enthusiasts turned up to join Reserve Warden Brian McGhie and local naturalist Tricia Moxey on the annual fungus foray through this wooded reserve.

The late summer and autumnal weather influences the range of fungi that produce fruiting bodies and the number of fruiting bodies. The 2012 season produced an excellent crop of the smaller and more challenging species which tend to be difficult to identify in the field. We noted an interesting range of 30 different fungi, including several previously unrecorded ones, which were added to the overall list for this site.

The emphasis of the walk included a description of their vital role within the woodland, both as decomposers and symbionts, as many species help trees and other plants to thrive. The feeding part of the various species, the hyphae, form an extensive mycelium within the soil and the rotting wood, both standing and fallen.

A number of dull yellow common earth balls were found in the leaf litter alongside a well used path. This decomposer thrives in areas where there are plenty of nutrient-rich materials ready to be recycled. Another common species beside paths is the 5cm-tall pink-coloured toadstool, the lilac fairy bonnet *Mycena pura*. A number of other *Mycena* species were noted on rotting stumps.



Puff balls. Photo: Ron Andrews

Some toadstools appear in circles or fairy rings and a common one in this locality is the clouded funnel, which occurs in the same place year after year. Brown slippery-capped butter caps were frequent among fallen leaves.

We saw a large troop of the tan-brown glistening ink cap *Coprinellus micaceus* on a rotting log, and an impressive group of the larger black and white shaggy ink cap *Coprinus comatus* among some fallen leaves. This species is edible when young – but not with alcohol as it causes vomiting. Another rotting log hosted some almost mature puff balls *Lycoperdon pyriforme*, a species which is edible when young.

A few rotting logs revealed the black fruiting bodies of the candle snuff fungus, which have white tips. This is one of the bioluminescent species, another being the widely distributed



Fairy bonnet mushrooms. Photo: Ron Andrews

parasitic honey fungus. A number of mature silver birches have the white brackets of the birch polypore growing from their trunks; this is an inedible fungus, but one that can be used as tinder when dry.

Within the Reserve there is a small ancient grassland area which usually yields some interesting species typical of this special habitat. Although the grass had been cut a week or so before our visit, some golden yellow butter waxcaps were present. The substantial 50cm-tall parasol mushrooms were not yet fully formed, and their unexpanded caps resembled large scaly drumsticks.

There were opportunities to photograph many of the species found and to discuss the finer points required to identify them. As always, the rich variety of size, shape and colour constantly remind us of the amazing variety of such beautiful and enchanting organisms to be found on a short walk in the autumn!

Tricia Moxey

Knighton Wood and Lord's Bushes (9 December 2012)

Knighton Wood and Lord's Bushes provided a superb location and exceptional weather for our annual pre-Christmas celebratory walk. 45 walkers joined us (attracted, perhaps, by the thought of mince pies at the end?).

Together the sites form an amazing area of 53 hectares (about 130 acres), an 'island' of Epping Forest in the midst of Buckhurst Hill, with houses on all sides. But during our walk there was little sight of houses and only the remnants of Buxton's 'woodland garden' to suggest its more urban context.

Knighton Wood was enclosed from the Forest, probably from the early 1700s. It is best known today as the Victorian woodland garden of the Knighton Estate, owned by Edward North Buxton from 1863 until his death in 1924. Fortunately, due in part to the efforts of Sir James Hawkey, the garden was bought in 1930, with the City of London and Woodford Council each contributing half of the costs. The Buxton family gave a further 5 acres. The land came back into the Forest, protecting it in perpetuity for public access and enjoyment.

Buxton was a remarkable person, who along with several



'The Lake' in Knighton Wood. Photo: Ron Andrews

other members of his family made a substantial contribution to the saving of Epping, Hainault and Hatfield Forests. He was the longest-serving Verderer – 44 years, from 1880 until 1924. Many of you may have read his book, *Epping Forest*. It went into nine editions and makes fascinating reading even today.

The magnificent trees, including Austrian pine, deodar and red oak, the vibrant display of bulbs in early spring and many intriguing veteran trees make for a rewarding visit at any time of year. The landscaped paths and lakes, the largest with a landscaped rock outcrop (Pulhamite) along its northern bank, added a little magic to our visit too.

Crossing Monkham's Lane, an ancient trackway, once the site for the trial of a tramway in 1872/3 being proposed for a steam railway company in Portugal, takes you into the wilder area of Lord's Bushes. This supports over 300 veteran trees, mainly oak and hornbeam, ranking it among the top 30 sites in the UK for such trees. The veterans contrast sharply with the stands of young hornbeam that have grown since the extensive fires of 1976. We climbed the only real hill on the site and came onto Jericho Plain, which the Conservators have been opening up again as part of wood pasture restoration.

On our return to the car park, we paid homage to the rather splendid Pulpit Oak, so called as it is shaped like a pulpit – or did local preachers preach here, or perhaps did beating the bounds on rogation Sunday take place here?

Lynn Haseldine Jones has recently written Grand Commuters – Buckhurst Hill and Its Leading Families. If you wish to take a look, it is in local bookshops or can be obtained from the Loughton and District Historical Society.

Judy Adams

Waterfowl and other wintering birds on Wanstead Flats (17 February 2012)

32 enthusiastic birdwatchers joined local ornithologist Tim Harris for a gentle walk across Wanstead Flats in February. The early morning frost had disappeared, leaving the ground incredibly soggy, but all were dressed to deal with the slippery wet mud. The bright sunshine made a pleasant contrast to the recent dull days and encouraged some spring-like behaviour from songbirds such as dunnocks and great tits.

The most numerous species seen were gulls, possibly 500 in total, mainly common gulls but a large number of black-headed gulls and at least a single herring gull were spotted among the assembly feeding on the flooded fairground site. With Tim's telescope it was possible to distinguish the features of immature gulls clearly and identify a brightly coloured Egyptian goose feeding alongside them. Many of the gulls overwinter here, dispersing in spring to various parts of northern Europe.

Jubilee Pond supports a number of Canada geese, but several resident mallards and a pair of tufted duck bred successfully on this pond in 2102. The overwintering pochards are likely to return to breed in Scandinavia before April.

Tim explained the geographical importance of the Flats as a stopping off point for many migratory species during both the spring and autumn. Birds flying south along the green corridor of the River Roding stop and refuel here before crossing the London conurbation to continue their southward journey across southern England. We saw several overwintering fieldfares and a pair of resident mistle thrushes feeding in the grass.

On the grassland area several skylarks enchanted us with their song as they spiralled towards the blue sky, and a number of small brown birds flitting from bush to bush turned out to be a flock of linnets.



Group enjoying close views of a hovering kestrel. Photo: Ron Andrews

The star turn of the morning was a kestrel which hovered over the recently cut sward and then swooped upwards, alighting on a large platform of twigs in the branches of a big oak. This elegant bird has chosen to nest in a highly visible spot. Assuming that the pair manages to raise a brood in this prime location, it will be a marvellous opportunity to observe their activities from a discreet distance.

Tim was able to give hints on identifying species, and his detailed knowledge of the birds of the area made this a really enjoyable walk, with a chance to see a number of species both on the water, standing in it or flying overhead. We all felt encouraged to do more birdwatching and were considerably more informed about the local bird life at the end of the walk.

If you are interested in more information about the birds of Wanstead Flats, the annual reports are available online at www.wrengroup.org.uk.

Tricia Moxey

THE FRIENDS OF EPPING FOREST
NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
AND FORM OF NOMINATION FOR OFFICE HOLDERS

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, WEDNESDAY 3 JULY 2013, 7.15 PM,
BANCROFT'S PREP, SCHOOL HALL

7:15 pm AGM, followed by tea/coffee
8:30 pm Talk by Paul Thomson, Superintendent of Epping Forest.

Agenda for AGM:

1. Minutes of the last AGM, held on 27 May 2012
2. Matters Arising
3. Chairman's Report 2012/13
4. Treasurer's Report
5. Election of Vice Chairman, Secretary and Membership Secretary
6. Election of Committee Members
7. Election of Vice President – Ken Hoy
8. Election of Independent Examiner
9. Any Other Business

Honorary Committee members at present are:

Chairman: Judy Adams (2012- 2015)
Vice-Chairman: Sue McKinley (2010-2013)
Secretary: Mike Smith (since Feb 2013)
Treasurer: Alan Curran (2011-2014)
Membership Sec: Jean Brockington (2010-2013)
Committee members: Bill Dexter, Ken Hoy, Tricia Moxey, Peter Read and Pete Wrobel (Editor).

Committee members are re-elected each year. If you wish to submit nominations, please complete the form below and send it to: Mike Smith, Secretary, by Monday, 3 June 2013.

THE FRIENDS OF EPPING FOREST - NOMINATION FORM (either cut out, or photocopy)

I nominate for the office of Vice Chairman / Secretary / Membership Secretary / Committee member/s:

Name

Address

Tel

Signature of Candidate

Signature of Proposer

Name in Capitals

Tel

Signature of Seconder

Name in capitals

Tel

Please include a statement by nominee (up to 100 words on your experience and how you will contribute to the Friends).

GETTING TO KNOW EPPING FOREST
by KEN HOY

Updated 2nd edition with over 220 pages of Epping Forest information.

Reference to over 300 place names.

Over 200 pictures, illustrations and maps of the Forest area (mostly in colour) dating from the early 1800s to the present. On sale in local bookshops.

A free copy of the History of the Friends when you buy this book from us! Price £8.95 per copy. Please send cheque (made out to Friends of Epping Forest) with order to Judy Adams, 2 High View Close, Loughton, Essex IG10 4EG, adding a delivery charge of £2.50 unless collected.



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Thursday 18 April 10.30 am – 12.30 pm

Around Earl's Path

Come and join Tricia Moxey for a gentle stroll round this part of the Forest to see the unfolding leaves and flowers. Meet at the car park off Earl's Path, Loughton. IG10. Grid Ref: TQ 415 967

Saturday 27 April 11 am – 12.30 pm

Visit Gifford Wood

Join a short guided walk to look at the site and view the plan. Meet in Upshire Village Hall car park, Horseshoe Hill, Upshire. EN9 3SP. Grid Ref: TL 416 011.

Sunday 12 May 2 pm

Beating the Bounds walk – Loughton Town Council

Join the second stage of the 'boundary' walk of Loughton. Starting at the Robin Hood, you'll be walking through the Forest in springtime. Details www.loughton-tc.gov.uk/.

Saturday 18 May 10:30 am – 12:30 pm

Discovering Mallinson Park Wood and Highams Park Lake

Come and join Ron and Pat Andrews to discover two contrasting areas, both with interesting histories and present-day use and each making a different contribution to the Forest and its wildlife. Meet at the junction of The Charter Road/Falmouth Avenue (the southern end of Highams Park Lake) E4. Grid Ref: TQ393 918.

Sunday 9 June 10.30 am – 12.30 pm

Discovering the Forest's Meadows and Rides

Join Judy Adams on a leisurely walk to discover more of the flowers and butterflies of Yates Meadow, Yardley Hill and beyond. Good views, too! Meet along Hornbeam Lane, off Bury Road, Chingford E4. Grid Ref: TQ 393 958.

Friday 14 June 7.00 pm – 10.30 pm

Gifford Wood Quiz Night

Upshire Village Hall, to raise money for the Appeal. Tables of eight will be available. Are you ready to pit your knowledge against other Forest enthusiasts? Charge £9.50 per person. Food included, along with soft drinks. Bring your own wine/beer if you wish. General questions along with a few Epping Forest 'specials'. For more details, see cover story, page 1.

Saturday 22 June 7.00 pm – 9.00 pm

A Midsummer Evening Walk

Come and join Peter Read on a leisurely stroll to celebrate the essence of summer across Chingford Plain, Bury Wood and the Cuckoo Brook. Meet in the Forest car park on Chingford Plain, adjacent to the Royal Epping Forest Golf Club car park, Bury Road, Chingford E4 7AZ. Grid Ref: TQ 394 949.

Tuesday 25 June 6.30pm – 10.30 pm

Lord Mayor's Tree Party

A celebratory tree-themed evening in the grand surroundings of the Mansion House. Reduced rates for Friends members – for details, see cover story.

Wednesday 3 July, 7.15 pm

Annual General Meeting

See notice, page 9.

Thursday 4 July 10.30 am – 12.30 pm

High Beach in its Heyday

Come and join local historian Georgina Green to hear about the impact on the Forest of the arrival of the railways at Loughton and Chingford. These brought many thousands of people to enjoy the open air on Sundays and Bank Holidays. 130 years ago, High Beach was a popular destination with many attractions for day trippers: we will try to capture what it was like for the visitors, and for those who lived at High Beach at that time. Meet in the car park near the Pillow Mounds at High Beach Grid Ref: TQ 411 982.

Sunday 4 August 10.30 am – 12.30 pm

Gilbert's Slade in Summer

Come and join Tricia Moxey on a gentle stroll round this varied part of Epping Forest. Meet in the car park on Snaresbrook Rd, E18. Grid Ref: TQ 395 890.



Last year's High Beach Festival included a fun dog show. Photo: Gill Hopkins

Saturday 7 September (11 am – 4 pm)

High Beach Festival

Work is already under way for the High Beach Festival, now in its second year! The Friends will be having a stall, selling cold drinks and showing participants a little of the Forest. Activities at the church, dog show, children's races on the green and pond dipping and more at Epping Forest Field Centre, along with golf and cricket too. A real celebration of the Forest's heritage and its communities!

Sunday 15 September 9.00 am – 5.00 pm

The Annual Epping Forest Centenary Walk

Discover a little more about the whole Forest. Walk the entire length of Epping Forest in the day or take part in one of the local sections of the long walk. Celebrate how lucky we are to have Epping Forest! Arranged by the Friends of Epping Forest, with support from The Ramblers and the Corporation of London, the walk celebrates the 1878 passing of the Epping Forest Act. For more details, contact 020 8418 0730 or visit www.friendsofeppingforest.org.uk.

Thursday 21 November

Forest Supper

Save the date: the venue will be Hawkey Hall and we'll be working with Alan Beere Catering as last year. Details to come in the next *Newsletter*.

AN ENCOUNTER WITH THE CONSERVATION VOLUNTEERS

On the day of the Forest Walk in September last year, a group from the Epping Forest Conservation Volunteers (EFCV) were busy with chainsaws, loppers, axes and an arsenal of other equipment, clearing away and pollarding trees on the slope of Warren Wood hill. I was passing by on my way back (early, I confess) from the Walk, stopped, took some photographs and exchanged a few words, but had to move on.

Six months later, I'm sitting down with Spencer Cleminson, a longstanding committee member and assistant leader of the volunteers at Warren Wood that day, to find out what they had been doing and how the EFCV operates.

"We were actually removing blackthorn, pollarding some of the hawthorn and removing a significant number of oak trees. We also removed some birch, some elder and a small quince – don't ask me what that was doing there," explains Spencer. "However, we left untouched a large yew and a crab apple, because the ecologists are keen to retain as many yews and crab apples in the forest as they can."

The idea of the clearance was to stop the scrub and woodland encroaching on one of the Forest's open spaces, and to encourage wildlife of all sorts back to the Forest, part of a ten-year project dubbed Operation Nightingale. Snakes – grass snakes and adders – like an open space, for example, but their numbers have been on the decline. The hawthorns were being pollarded to create a habitat to lure nightingales. The part they were working on was done in inlays or scallops – much more beneficial for wildlife than a dense line of blackthorn.



Volunteer Sean Green removes encroaching oak from the Warren Wood ride. Photo: Peter Wrobel

The EFCV has been around since 1977, when a small group of people decided they would like to do some voluntary work in the Forest (one of the founders, Peter Lyons, is currently chairman of the organisation). The City was very encouraging, says Spencer. "They provided us with a tool store, but they made it clear that what we did was our own affair, to the extent that they weren't going to be supplying us with any tools or equipment."



A brief break during work in the January snows at Canada Plain. Photo: Heather Elliott

So while the EFCV works closely with, and by agreement with, the City, it is independent. It has bought and paid for all its equipment itself. "We rely solely on donations we get from our members," says Spencer.

The volunteers are out working in the Forest on three and sometimes four Sundays a month, all year round – come rain or shine, or indeed snow – and once a month on Tuesdays. They are of all ages, from teenagers doing their Duke of Edinburgh awards up to a lady in her 80s, with up to 20 members on one task. But there is always room for more. "We'd be happy if any of the Friends wanted to join us on any occasion," says Spencer.

Each trip begins with a site visit by the leader or assistant leader of the task team with the ecology team from the City, to make a risk assessment and determine exactly what work needs to be done. But when the work begins, the volunteers work alone, with no one from the City supervising them.

Examples of their work are dotted around the Forest, from clearing out ponds, including the five at Suntrap, to being responsible – at the City's request – for looking after the Forest's bogs. "Most of what we do is clearance work," says Spencer.

As one of the largest conservation volunteer groups in the South East, the EFCV is in constant demand. "Once a year we go down to Two Tree Island at Leigh-on-Sea, where we lay faggots out onto the mudflat to prevent erosion, working with the Essex Wildlife Trust," says Spencer, also mentioning trips to the Fir and Pond Wood at Potter's Bar to work on lakes and ponds with the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust. "It gives people a chance to work in a different environment and perhaps do a different sort of work," he says.

The volunteers also provide feedback for the City on anything they think it needs to know about. "Occasionally we surprise them," says Spencer. His report for the work on Warren Wood last year lists a speckled wood butterfly, a comma butterfly, a large emerald moth and a female green oak bush cricket.

For contact information and how to get involved, see www.efcv.co.uk.

Pete Wrobel

Anyone thinking ahead to Christmas?

CALLING ALL PHOTOGRAPHERS!

We are hoping to produce Forest Christmas cards again this year. Have you taken some good images this winter – the Forest in snow, people enjoying the winter, its wildlife or an amazing Christmas shot? It will be a picture celebrating the Forest.

Last year's cards sold very well, allowing members to share our love of the Forest with many friends and

family as well as bringing funds into the Friends. To encourage you, here are two examples from previous cards, highlighting Connaught Water and High Beach.

Please send any photographs/email them to Judith.adams21@btinternet.com or telephone 020 8418 0730 to discuss.



*Icy conditions for the mallards at Connaught Water.
Photo: Dasein Photo.*



*Old pollards at High Beach.
Photo: Ron Andrews*

JOIN THE FRIENDS OF EPPING FOREST

The Friends want Epping Forest to be a natural environment rich in wildlife, available and increasingly appreciated, used and understood by the public.

Our main aims are to support the preservation of Epping Forest as an open space for recreation and to preserve its natural aspect; and to further the understanding, appreciation, enjoyment and use of the Forest.

Our activities include responding to planning applications and the many consultation documents that affect the Forest emanating from central and local government and the City of London, which manages Epping Forest.

We also run a programme of guided walks including the annual Epping Forest Centenary Walk and we produce

publications about the Forest.

Increasingly we are working with local groups around the Forest, to support their activities and to contribute a Forest-wide view on local issues and opportunities.

We are a membership organisation funded by voluntary subscriptions and donations and run entirely by volunteers.

Become a member of the Friends of Epping Forest and help us protect the Forest and help other people learn about and enjoy it.

Contact: Jean Brockington, Membership Secretary
jean.brockington@btopenworld.com 020 8529 3077
www.friendsofeppingforest.org.uk/join.htm