

Friends of Epping Forest



Newsletter Spring 2016

www.friendsofeppingforest.org.uk

BIGGER REALLY IS BETTER



Two landscapes, shared issues. The Lakes...

There is a welcome announcement in CPRE's *Countryside Voice* that the Lake District and the Yorkshire Dales National Parks are to join up, effective from 1 August 2016. It's a landmark victory for the long campaign to re-examine the original boundaries set in the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. But it also holds lessons for Epping Forest.

In Epping Forest, it is the wealth of wildlife – its biodiversity – which makes the Forest so special for nature conservation. Of a total area of 2,450 hectares, 1,728 hectares have been notified as the Epping Forest Site of Special Scientific Interest by Natural England, the government's adviser for the natural environment in England, and 1,605 hectares are designated as a Special Area of Conservation, a European designation. These designations help to protect the Forest. Indeed the Epping Forest Act provides further protection.

And size matters to us as well. The size of Epping Forest helps to protect it. The Forest may appear fragmented, but it is also joined up. It is also networked to the adjacent Lee Valley Park and the wider countryside to the east. And its value to local people is very high. But there are challenges; development pressures surround the Forest and demands for new use of Forest land increase. In a recent issue of *Countryside Voice*, we read that the Green Belt is under threat – 219,000 houses are planned on Green Belt land.

For the Lakes and the Dales, the new boundaries respect the integrity of the two national parks, but substantially enhance the value of each, providing a larger area for wildlife

and people. To make this happen, the boundaries of each National Park have been extended. The Lake District National Park has increased by around 3 per cent, largely to the south and east, while the Yorkshire Dales National Park has grown in two areas, largely in the north and west, expanding it by a quarter. With their boundaries meeting, the two parks provide a much-extended joined up landscape.

In the 1949 Act, nature conservation focused on designated landscapes and nature reserves, many owned by bodies such as the Wildlife Trusts and the RSPB. Later the designation and protection of SSSIs (Sites of Special Scientific Interest) were added, but the site-based approach largely continued. That's changed. The last half of the first decade of 2000 saw various reports written, notably John Lawton's *Making Space for Nature 2010*. Lawton observed that creating and enhancing isolated sites had not effectively protected British wildlife. Instead, he proposed the creation and enhancement of ecological networks. More, bigger, better and joined up became the bywords.

While this expansion of the National Parks shows a commitment to the value of joined up and bigger areas, we can't relax. The government says it is committed to National Park protection, yet part of the North Yorks Moors NP will be dug up to make way for the world's largest potash mine, set to be visible from an eighth of the National Park. Fracking too is in the news. The government has issued 159 fracking licences across England, potentially affecting 293 Sites of Scientific Interest.

So despite advances, the challenges for the Friends will continue – and we will continue to be vigilant. **Judy Adams**



...and Cuckoo Brook, Epping Forest. Photo Hornbeam Arts.

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

QR code – from phone to web

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



Dear Friend...

It is difficult to believe the recent scale of flooding in Britain. It must be so distressing for all those affected, along with the as yet unknown impacts on agriculture, businesses and wildlife. We have been very fortunate by comparison. The Forest is very wet in places and although some will have been pleased to see daffodils and other flowers in bloom in December, the forecast colder weather for January and February will undoubtedly knock them back.

The adverse weather conditions in November also reduced numbers in the Visitor Centre, but in December and over the holiday period our visitor numbers were much greater than last year. It was good to see so many people coming to the Centre and taking part in the Friends' walks and self-guided trails. Everyone we met was in a positive and friendly state of mind, pleased to be in the Forest at this time.

You will see that progress has been made regarding discussions with the Epping Forest Centenary Trust (see article, page 6). Ultimately, there will be an important decision for the Friends to make: whether we would be stronger together to facilitate the growth and development of the Friends' activities, or not.



Gifford Wood was officially opened in September by Alderman Gordon Haines, Chairman of the Epping Forest & Commons Committee (left) and Sir Roger Gifford – with children from Upshire Primary Foundation School, who planted trees in the Wood two years earlier. Photo Peter Wrobel.

We hope that you enjoyed the Christmas break and had a chance to recharge your batteries for the months ahead. In March, there will be a national programme, Clean for the Queen, led by the Keep Britain Tidy Group with many other supporters. Litter is a big issue in the Forest and I think it is important that we take part to make a real difference. Many people already take their own black litter bag on their strolls through the Forest. If you would like to help in your local area of the Forest, please contact us by email at visitorcentre@friendsofeppingforest.org.uk or telephone 020 8418 0730 and we'll try to organise several teams.

The year ahead promises to be yet another busy one. May I wish you all a very happy and prosperous new year.

Judy Adams



Winter sunshine at Connaught Water. Photo Peter Wrobel.

FOREST MATTERS

Open Spaces Bill

In our last issue, we mentioned the proposals by the City London for an Open Spaces Bill, which has now been deposited in Parliament. This Bill was expected to be introduced in January 2016 (subject to the satisfactory completion of a formal stage on 18 December 2015).

It has not yet been decided whether the Bill will start in the House of Lords or in the House of Commons. That decision was due to be made by 8 January 2016 (and information posted on the website below). As the *Newsletter* went to press, however, that information was still unavailable.

Our particular concerns had related to the maximum duration of a lease, management of events and licensing of activities. The proposal does increase the licensing period from the current three-year period to 15 years and up to 21 years, where a longer period is required to secure investment in a building. This is much longer than we had hoped for, but the longer period does allow for investment in the facility, which could benefit the amenity and services available in the Forest.

We also note that the version which has been deposited ensures that the policy that has to be developed for events in the Forest must now contain a provision limiting the frequency and duration of events. The section on the licensing schemes applies to commercial activities, and the latest draft makes this much clearer.

To read the draft Bill, track its progress and how to object, go to services.parliament.uk/bills/2015-16/cityoflondoncorporationopenspaces.html **Judy Adams**

Congratulations to Peter Adams, MBE

Our congratulations go to Peter Adams, who has become an MBE in the New Year Honours list, for voluntary services to the Conservation of the Flora and Fauna in South West Essex and East London.

I first met Peter some 50 years ago when he was already a keen naturalist and I could see his passion for wildlife and for Epping Forest. At an early age he did a study of foxes, including rehabilitating rescued ones and returning them to the wild. He taught natural history evening classes and weekend courses, led numerous guided walks, and gave talks about the Forest and its wildlife. His prolific reading ►



Embedded in the environment – literally! Peter Adams, awarded an MBE in the New Year Honours List, points out items of interest to a Friends walking group while ankle deep in Highams Park Lake. Photo Peter Wrobel.

► and studies gave him deep understanding, and he is never happier than when he is passing his knowledge on to people of any age.

I persuaded him to join the Friends' Committee, and Peter made a substantial contribution to a number of projects. After a few years he left the Committee and was active with the Local Group of Essex Wildlife Trust. He also became a trustee of the Royal Gunpowder Mills with special responsibility for the SSSI within the site. He was not satisfied with all this, and I was not at all surprised when he became a Forest Verderer.

Nineteen years later Peter is even more active with the conservators, sharing his experience and knowledge on the City's many other open spaces across London as well as maintaining links with local councillors and community groups. But Peter is not all about talk. He is an active volunteer at the Visitor Centre and as a volunteer project officer for the Epping Forest Centenary Trust where he leads weekly work parties for their Green Team carrying out practical conservation projects throughout the Forest.

His award also acknowledges the role of volunteers in the Forest and the value they add to the community. I am sure he would see it this way too. **Ken Hoy**

Forest Diary and Forest Focus

As we mentioned in the last *Newsletter*, the Diary is no longer being produced. By way of compensation, *Forest Focus*, the City's Forest magazine, is being produced four times a year (not three as previously), and it now contains the "Diary" for the period of that issue.

If you would like to receive *Forest Focus* by email, simply send your email to epping.forest@cityoflondon.gov.uk and ask to be added to the mailing list.

If you sign up to receive *Forest Focus* by email, you will receive a 10 per cent discount voucher for you to spend at the View on all stock, except arts and crafts items, between now and the end of February 2016.

It is still possible to obtain *Forest Focus* by post, but you will need to pay £2.50 for one copy or £10.00 per year to receive the four issues. **Judy Adams**

Wanstead 1,000 Species Challenge launch

The Wren Group has launched its new 1,000 species project for 2016. Will they be able to see and record 1,000 species in the year 2016? And how long will it take to note 1,000 species in their area (broadly the southernmost section of Epping Forest but also including the back gardens of Forest Gate, Manor Park, Leytonstone and Wanstead)?

This project has been developed from their BioBlitz in June 2015, where they recorded the species they found over one weekend. And what is a BioBlitz? In general terms, it is an intensive exercise in finding and recording the different kinds of plants and animals in a defined study area over a period of time. For more on the BioBlitz, have a look at the article on the Visitor Centre on page 7, where we hope to include some aspects of this in summer 2016. **Judy Adams**

Loughton's Special Trees

Following on from the production of the Tree Strategy for Loughton, the Town Council, along with Countrycare, is now launching the Loughton Town Trees special project to find out which trees matter most for the people of Loughton.

Whether you live in Loughton or are simply interested in the project, you can follow its progress at www.loughton-tc.gov.uk. **Judy Adams**

..... CELEBRATING CHRIS, THE CUCKOO

The British Trust for Ornithology has now had to assume that Chris died crossing the desert before reaching his African sanctuary in the Tibesti Mountains in northern Chad.

Chris was first tagged in spring 2011, and the BTO followed him until late summer 2015. During this time he amassed huge support from the public and became their most famous



Chris the Cuckoo, with the radio transmitter on his back. Photo Phil Atkinson/BTO

cuckoo. He was the only bird out of the initial five tagged that the BTO was able to follow for this length of time. Have a look at their website, to see what information he has provided and the activities of other cuckoos in the study: <http://www.bto.org/science/migration/tracking-studies/cuckoo-tracking/about/celebrating-chris>

TV presenter and naturalist Chris Packham summarised his contribution: “Chris has rewarded the BTO with its highest honour – important new reliable data – and has revolutionised the way we understand migration. And, if he has fallen in action then ‘in some corner of a foreign desert that is for ever cuckoo, there shall be in that gold sand a richer dust concealed’.”

In the autumn newsletter of the Wren Wildlife and Conservation Group, Wren chairman Tim Harris noted the virtual disappearance of cuckoos migrating through the Wanstead parklands area of the Forest in the past few years. The BTO reports that cuckoo numbers have dropped by 65 per cent since the 1980s.

The reason for this decline is not known, but it has been suggested that declines in its hosts, or climate-induced shifts in the timing of breeding of its hosts, could have reduced the number of nests that are available for cuckoos to parasitise. As we know, cuckoos parasitise other birds’ nests to ensure the young cuckoos survive.

The latest research is examining whether changes in the abundance or timing of breeding of the four species most frequently used by cuckoos is behind the large-scale decline of the cuckoo.

(With thanks to the BTO and Chris). **Ken Hoy**

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MYSTERY QUIZ

What is happening here? What has the flower in the photograph been cut open to show? (Photos and question, Ken Hoy.)

Answer on page 15





Before the supper, the quiz: Friends and guests at the Forest Supper puzzle over the quiz questions. Photo Peter Wrobel

FRIENDS MATTERS

Forest Supper 2015

Another successful Forest Supper! The Chingford Assembly Hall has proved a very good venue and with the usual quizzes (including a flower quiz prepared by Verderer Michael Chapman to add to the place name one by Harry Bitten) and raffle, a good night was had by all. In spite of the Friends' first time Centre Information Assistants' table, we were still pipped at the post by the Ramblers. We eagerly await a re-match next year.

It was good to welcome Alderman Gordon Haines and his wife, Caroline, who again demonstrated her consummate skills at calling the raffle.

Thank you, Keith French

Keith French, the Head Forest Keeper, has retired after 14 years working in the Forest. The Friends have been very grateful for his assistance (and that of the Keepers) with the Annual Centenary Walk. Many thanks, Keith, and our very best wishes to you in your retirement.

Merger/new Trust discussions

As you will be aware from the autumn Newsletter, the Epping Forest Centenary Trust invited the Friends to meet with them to discuss whether the exploration of a potential merger/establishment of a new trust could be of value to each organisation. The Friends Committee have now held two meetings with EFCT's Committee, facilitated by Judy. These joint sessions have allowed the Committees to explore and

HELP US HELP YOU – SEND US YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS!



We would like to be able to contact Members with information about the Forest by email. While the Newsletter comes out three times a year, it is amazing how frequently some of the consultations for example come up between Newsletters. So if you would like to keep in touch with consultations, events coming up and Forest issues, would you please send your name and email to: secretary@friendsofeppingforest.org.uk.

It will help us keep you informed. We will never give any other organisation the address and we will only ever send Forest-based information. If you had an email from us about the Epping Forest Act or the consultation "the Next Ten Years", then you are among the small number of members whose email addresses we have.

share potential issues and concerns and also the potential opportunities and benefits for each organisation of coming together. Each is very mindful of the different environment now from the one they worked in when they began in 1969 (Friends) and 1978 (EFCT). The complementary nature of their work for the Forest and the mutual commitment to the whole area of the Forest were clearly evident.

It is now jointly proposed to bring the overall principle of coming together as a new Trust for consideration by the respective memberships in February/March. Friends' members will receive details and the date of this meeting shortly. Subject to the outcome of that meeting, the more detailed work that would be required would begin. At the end of that process, formal agreement of the membership would be sought .

Epping Forest Visitor Centre

Changes afoot! You'll see a picture of our new bookshelves. They have come from Epping Bookshop, where the owner has retired, after many years in Epping.

We have also had a new screen installed, so once we have a few 'shows' developed and get properly hooked up to our computer, we will be able to provide more information for our visitors.

Our Information "staff" have been working right through the Christmas period and had a number of high attendances. Since April 2014, we have assisted over 28,000 visitors. This is a very significant contribution from the Friends to Forest visitors.

You'll see below a picture of some of our 23 volunteers developing new skills! At our recent Christmas Party at the

ENJOY THE EASY ACCESS PATH THIS SPRING

We are keen to encourage groups with learning, sensory or mobility difficulties to visit us at the Centre particularly on Thursdays or Fridays between 10:30 am and 12:30 pm. If you join us then, we'll give a short presentation, have a chat about the Forest and encourage you to try out our scavenger hunt along the Easy Access Trail. Prizes all round!

You could bring a picnic – a large tarpaulin is provided on loan for your visit – or enjoy lunch at one of the many nearby facilities.

To book: ring 020 8418 0730 or email visitorcentre@friendsofeppingforest.org.uk. The Centre has a toilet for people with disabilities.

Queen Elizabeth Hunting Lodge, they had a go at playing carols and tunes, with either whistles or bells. I could not say which the stronger team was. However certainly neither will be taking part in any local carol evenings just yet. They were aptly named the whistle blowers and the bell ringers!

Looking ahead to next summer, we are planning our Open Day for July 16, this year taking a bit more of a wildlife focus. We are hoping to build on the BioBlitz concept (now, there is a phrase), which is about how much wildlife you can see and record in a set period, often 24 hours. We are just beginning to work with the FSC Epping Forest Field Centre to see how we can get involved. Watch this space, with more details in the next newsletter. ➤



New shelves at the Visitor Centre – and, inset, volunteers at their Christmas Party developing new skills. Photos Judy Adams.



Irene Buchan: well loved teacher and longstanding member of the Friends, who died in December. Photo Ron Andrews.

► Irene Buchan

We were so sorry to learn that Irene passed away in December. She had been less well for some time but took to her bed only in the last week of her life. She had been a very longstanding member of the Friends of Epping Forest, helping with planning work, leading walks, delivering newsletters and a Committee member for many years. Many of us remember her cogent comments in relation to the impact of light pollution on the Forest.

She was also a well loved teacher at Suntrap, where many children benefitted from her enthusiasm and knowledge of

Epping Forest. Her consummate commitment to the Forest and its wildlife, her diligent research into local history and her pleasure in sharing her interests with others made her a joy to be with. She made many significant contributions to our understanding of both the wildlife and history of the Forest. A few months ago, when we sought help for her with her newsletter delivery round, I received a staggering response from many members who offered to assist her, one saying it would be a pleasure to take on her round!

Our sincere condolences to her family. Irene will be sadly missed.

Thank you, Buckhurst Hill U3A group

Four members of the Buckhurst Hill University of the Third Age group walked the Epping Forest Centenary Walk this year to celebrate the Forest. At the same time, they collected donations for the Friends. Judy was very pleased to accept their cheque at their recent Christmas "tea party".

We are also working to have a longer term relationship with them, perhaps to support some of our displays and activities in the Centre.



Christine Slade, Secretary of Buckhurst Hill U3A, presents a cheque to Judy Adams. Photo Mike Smith.

GETTING TO KNOW EPPING FOREST by KEN HOY

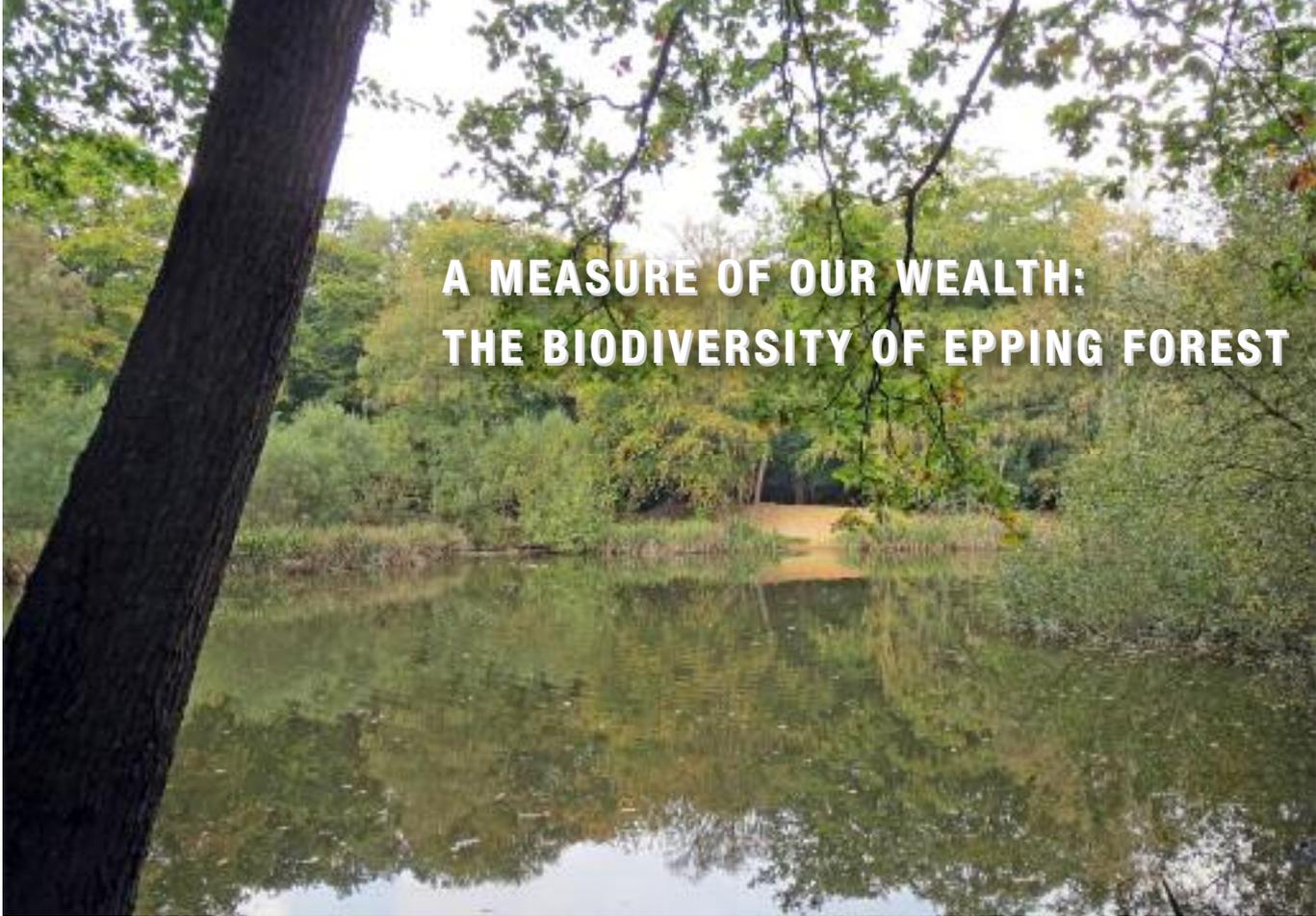
Updated 2nd edition with over 220 pages of Epping Forest information.

Reference to over 300 place names.

Over 200 pictures, illustrations and maps of the Forest area. On sale at the Visitor Centre (see page 7) and 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.





A MEASURE OF OUR WEALTH: THE BIODIVERSITY OF EPPING FOREST

The Lost Pond on Blackweir Hill, created by gravel works before World War One. Photo Peter Wrobel.

Biodiversity is a measure of the variety of living organisms present in an ecosystem, which supports life on this planet. Some people call it “the wealth of wildlife”. A good environment for wildlife generally supports a good variety of species for the habitat, while low biodiversity usually means a less interesting area, with a few species dominating. So in wildlife terms, diversity is good!

In Epping Forest, we do not know just how many species might be found here. In 1992 Mark Hanson mentions in his *Epping Forest thro’ the Eye of the Naturalist* a total of 6,159 species based on records gathered over many years – and 3,669 of these are invertebrates of which a number are Red Data or Nationally Scarce species.

Such lists are not static and there will have been additions and some losses too as a result of changes, including to habitat or sensitivity to pollution. The lemon slug, little egret, Egyptian goose, striped-winged grasshopper, wasp spider and floating pennywort are some of the recent notable additions.

Epping Forest supports over 55,000 veteran trees, descendants of those which colonised the area some 8,000 years ago. Appreciated as a cultural landscape, the Forest was largely managed for economic reasons for well over a thousand years, forming a unique habitat.

The Forest’s long-established bogs, acid grasslands and heathlands are valuable scarce habitats, as are its ponds, the oldest of which were dug out at least 350 years ago. Together this mosaic of vegetation types supports various mammals and birds as well as smaller less well known organisms such as wood boring beetles, flies, solitary bees, slugs, woodlice and of course different species of fungi. It is a hotspot for

biodiversity on an impressive scale.

But habitats change over time by a natural process called “succession”. In Britain, grasslands, meadows and heaths for example will, without any form of grazing or mowing, become woodland. Ponds gradually become colonised by various plant species and may be lost.

So those species which thrive in the earlier habitat (e.g. freshwater pond) may not be able to survive within that area when the habitat changes. Think of the woodland edge habitat, the open glades in the wood or the short grazed sward of acid grassland, or open water in ponds. Species in these habitats are under threat from succession.

To retain these habitats and the associated species, conservation works are needed. Specific conservation management of some of these habitats have been carried out by the Corporation and various voluntary groups for many years. They have cleaned out ponds and tackled the removal of alien invasive species, including Himalayan balsam, New Zealand pigmy weed and parrot feather, cut down scrub to encourage the spread of common cow wheat, and opened up ride and stream edges to allow light to reach the ground to encourage the establishment of a varied ground flora.

Habitat piles have been created for wildlife shelters, which also provide basking sites for common lizards. In addition, practical conservation work provides light, which gives dormant seeds long buried within the soil an opportunity to germinate and flourish. Perhaps we now appreciate a little more of its value and some of the work that may be required to sustain it into the future.

Tricia Moxey

WALK REPORTS

Wanstead Flats, Park and a View of the Roding (Sunday 11 October)

A group of 15 joined Mike Smith on a lovely fresh day for a walk in the south part of the Forest starting at the Harrow Road Pavilion. We had naturalist and Verderer Peter Adams on hand to give expert tree identification, forest management information and much else. The walk of 5 miles took the three very different habitats: Wanstead Flats, Wanstead Park and, outside the Forest, the Roding along with City of London cemetery.

From Wanstead Flats walking north towards Bush Wood, we found the row of lime trees known as Evelyn's Avenue. They are the successors to the original limes that were planted around 1680 as the eastwards approach to Wanstead House. Other avenues radiated to Eagle Pond and Capel Road. It must have been a huge and imposing building but sadly was sold in 1824 to pay gambling and other debts. The site didn't do an earlier owner much good either – Sir Giles Heron, the owner of Wanstead Hall, an earlier house in the same area, was hanged in 1540 for his opposition to Henry VIII.

Near the Blake Hall Road to Wanstead Park stands a lovely oak with an unusual trunk which looks as though it is multi-stemmed. There had been speculation that this may have been a bundle planting of young trees in the same hole, which was known to have been favoured by the landscape designer John Evelyn, but Peter Adams thought this tree was not as old and was probably a natural planting. See photo above, right.

We entered the former sewage works area, which closed in 1978 and was formally added to the Forest in 1994. It was also the site of an isolation hospital that closed in 1936. Little remains of these buildings or of the London Group Control Civil Defence centre in Northumberland Avenue, which was demolished in 2000.



Bundle planting or a natural planting? Photo Mike Smith.

Alongside the Roding and next to the City of London Cemetery there were few other people, and we enjoyed the river and the cemetery's trees. We turned east along the railway and continued on past Alexandra Lake, built by the unemployed at the turn on the century.

Further onto the Flats, we debated whether the iron structures between East Copse and Centre Copse were World War Two barrage balloon tethers and decided that they were probably just fencing off the barrage balloon area. We then passed by the works at the former Jubilee Boating Lake and returned to the start.

A good brisk walk on a fresh day.

Mike Smith



Pausing in the sunlight in Wanstead Park. Photo Mike Smith.



Stopping to look at a large group of honey fungus toadstools by a fallen tree on the Essex Way. Photo Kevin Mason

An Autumn Stroll in Gernon Bushes for Fruits and Fungi (Sunday 18 October)

We were pleased to have 28 people join us on a pleasant autumnal morning for the annual excursion to look for fungi in this ancient woodland reserve.

Although the summer had been warm with a reasonable amount of rain, September was one of the driest on record and this meant that many of the expected species were rather elusive. But with the help of several sets of eyes a range of specimens were discovered and their growth forms and different roles within this woodland ecosystem were explained.

Several are very common and widespread, being in the top 1,000 most frequently recorded species such as the brown and white striped brackets found on rotting wood which are known as turkey tails. Decomposers such as these are called saprotrophs and they are vital as they recycle decaying organic matter. The candle snuff, which has stiff black projections with white tips is also found on rotting stumps and is one of several species which glow in the dark. Other saprotrophs seen included a large cluster of pale cream coloured stump puff balls emerging from a well-rotted log and some larger blushing brackets on a fallen willow trunk. Deceivers or tan coloured toadstools were frequent in the grass beside paths.

Clouded funnel toadstools which grow in fairy rings and several separate rings were noted; these rings increase in diameter as they appear in the same locations year after year. Others such as the ochre brittle gill form a symbiotic association with the roots of specific tree species to ensure their wellbeing.

A number of different fairy bonnets were noted including the lilac-pink one *Mycena pura*, which is common alongside well used paths, and troops of the brown common bonnet, which is found on rotting wood.

An example of the weirdly shaped white saddle was found in deep leaf litter beside a path. The group also noted emerging clumps of grey coral.

The small patch of unimproved grassland supported a number of shiny butter wax caps, together with stouter flesh-coloured meadow wax caps and clusters of golden spindles.

I try to find something rather special as a final show stopper and fortunately there were several fine specimens of hare's ear almost hidden in fallen leaves. This is an example of one of the larger cup fungi which shoot ascospores from a shiny surface.

Tricia Moxey

From the Stubbles to the Fields (Sunday 8 November)

Led by Verderer Jo Emms, our walk began at the Stubbles, off Nursery Road, Loughton; one of a number of places in the Forest where there are still signs of "ridge and furrow" indicating that the area came under the plough at some time. From here we made our way up to Strawberry Hill Pond on the gravel ridge that marks out the top of the Forest. Many of the Forest's ponds are the remains of gravel pits dug in the 19th century to form the base of the new roads being laid out then.

The route south took us across land cleared by the Lord of the Manor of Loughton just before the Epping Forest Act of 1878 saved the Forest from such vandalism. Despite the more recent growth of woodland round it, a short climb up Warren Hill showed why it had held a windmill for many years. A little over a century ago the area to the east was open fields with views over the Roding Valley to Chigwell and beyond.

A brief respite as we strolled down hill was followed by an even sharper climb up out of Loughton to the top of Buckhurst Hill. In the days when commoners lopped the surrounding trees, there must have been spectacular views from here ►



Verderer Jo Emms briefs the group before they set off up Warren Hill. Photo Judy Adams.

- ▶ across the central block of the Forest (we had a glimpse of that view as we walked along). Until the coming of the railway, this area was made up of only scattered houses which were separated from Loughton by open farmland. That barrier remains, thanks to the Conservators, who bought most of what many local people still think of as French's Farm.

In the 19th century the French family operated a transport business before expanding into actually digging out gravel. In the 20th century they diversified even further into civil engineering. Nevertheless the old farm fields are still grazed by cattle or cut for hay. As we walked around them we felt that we were in a very rural situation despite the housing that was only just hidden by the surrounding trees. It certainly earns its name as "buffer" land.

Coming back into the Forest "proper", we re-climbed Warren Hill and made our way back through land that once formed part of Paul's then Fairhead's Nursery. The arbitrator appointed under the Epping Forest Act insisted that this land should be returned to the Forest, as it now is, once it ceased to be used as a plant nursery.

It was very pleasant to join Jo for the morning to learn a little of her local patch of Forest and enjoy some exercise at the same time!

Judy Adams

Around the Beach (Sunday 13 December)

The walk's title conjured up a very different image from the one we met on this Sunday. No sun umbrellas in sight, but rather

drizzle, a bit chilly, albeit with fantastically warm company! From the Centre, 32 participants walked first along a short section of the banking of the first "dirt track" in England for motorcycle racing, which opened in 1925. The operation continued until 1949, when it was superseded by other new venues nearer to London. Only in 1970 was the then Conservation Centre built, followed in 1989 by the "new" Visitor Centre, which the Friends have operated for nearly two years now.

Along the easy access trail we saw a number of very large old beech pollards (including probably one of the oldest trees in the Forest). These are the remains of much more extensive woodland, struck by fires in 1975 and 1976. Now the grass has largely gone, the silver birch has come and is soon to die, and young beech and oak are fighting for their place in the sky.

Out onto the Beach, named on account of the geology below: pebble gravels and Bagshot sands. We had a look at the Pillow Mounds, whose origins are a little obscure. Various worked flints have been found; but it is most likely that they are earlier rabbit warrens, recorded in 1753 as near High Beach.

We then walked down the slope, noting the extensive woodland restoration in progress. Some beech have been removed, veteran trees protected and new young trees pollarded for the first time. We walked on past the Duke of Wellington public house to Rat's Lane, an old path linking parts of the hamlet with the church at High Beach. Various wealthy families lived here in earlier times, including the Baring family.

High Beach had no church of its own, the nearest church being Waltham Abbey, some two miles away. A local campaign led to the construction of a church in 1836. But damp conditions meant the structure soon failed and as early as 1845 repairs were needed. After 1873 it was hardly used at all. Thomas Baring funded the construction of the church we see today and appointed the architect to construct it to his design (see article, page 14). It was built in memory of his two sons, who died infancy. The church was named Church of the Holy Innocents.

An area of rather soggy ground conditions led us on to Pauls' Nursery, originally run by the brothers Paul. It came into the Forest in 1920 and now brings showers of rhododendron flowers in June time. Mince pies and drinks in the Centre provided a seasonal ending to a refreshing walk!

Judy Adams

A Glimpse of Canada (Friday 1 January, New Year's Day)

The weather did us proud. Sprits were high too and what a splendid way to welcome the New Year with a walk in Epping Forest. 31 joined us and with the anticipation of a couple of family groups, we had planned a bit of a quiz en route to get the brains as well as the feet in gear.

During our walk, we searched for links to our clues – a loaf of bread, a majestic oak, gypsies, water sources and boats and carnival rides too. We journeyed from Forest School and Gilbert Slade, through to Walthamstow Forest and back via Canada Plain and St Peter's! It was wonderful to encounter the great oaks in Gilbert Slade, linking well with Forest School and its motto, *In pectore robur* – "in heart of oak".

Continuing under the North Circular opened in 1970, it was good to see the various underpasses ensuring walkers could access the land to the north, south, east and west of the vast roundabout. The construction of the road very much changed the road layout and landscape in that area. However we were less than impressed with the huge amounts of litter coming from the roads. One of our members noted how clean it had been when the Tour de France went by in the summer of 2014. It has prompted us to take part in the Clean for the Queen efforts on 5 and 6 March (see Dear Friend, page 3).

On Mill Plain, we found the site of an earlier windmill which was established in 1676 to grind corn (for our bread clue). Our youngest member was then charged to find lay preacher Gypsy Smith's monument. He became famous by becoming an evangelist in five continents.

Crossing over the North Circular and then Forest Road, we had good views of parts of London including the Shard, Gherkin and other "famous" buildings.

Coming from the waterworks (and over lots of slippery mud), we were pleased to come out onto Canada Plain and Bulrush Pond. Earlier last century, the public could go boating on the lake, have a picnic and take rides on ponies nearby. Some of the walkers had even taken such a ride in their youth. And while we could not reinstate the rides for our younger participants, we celebrated the day with sweets to eat, reminding us of the picnics that took place here.

We went back by St Peter's Church, where a newly formed friends group is campaigning for an additional pedestrian crossing over the Woodford New Road. A fun walk, with a varied and interesting history.

Judy Adams



The monument to lay preacher Gypsy Smith, ably found by our youngest walker. Photo Diana Watmough.

HISTORY CORNER – HIGH BEACH CHURCH

What is a Gothic-style Parish Church doing in the middle of the forest at High Beach? Why should such a building be located here? Clues to solving these questions can be found on one of the monuments in the churchyard; the cross marking the Baring family vault.

Until 1836, Sewardstone and its surrounding hamlets in the High Beach area had been served by the Abbey Church in Waltham Abbey. However, for many residents in the forest this was at an inconvenient distance.

Under the Acts for the Building of Additional Churches in Populous Parishes a chapel could be built to serve the local people as long as it was more than two miles from the original parish church. Permission was sought by the gentry of the area, notably the Sothebys, Wakes and Cockburns, and a site was finally agreed. This was the level clearing known as Blencow's Green on today's Church Road.

It was to prove a disastrous choice of site. Owing to its dampness, repairs were necessary in 1845 and 1852, and in 1869 it was showing signs of settlement in several places.

After 1873 it was hardly used.

Demolished in 1885, there is no visible sign of it now.

In 1870 Thomas Charles Baring MP offered to build a new church at his own expense if he might build it to his own design. He instructed Sir Arthur Blomfield as the architect and the present church was completed in 1873 at a cost of £5,500.



The cross marking the Baring family vault in High Beach churchyard recalls the role played by the Baring family in building the present church. Photo Revd Gill Hopkins.

The dedication was changed from that of St Paul to The Holy Innocents, commemorating the Baring's two young sons who had died in the USA.

This church was not consecrated until 1883 because there was a dispute under the Epping Forest Act of 1878 as to whether the land was an illegal enclosure. It finally became a Parish Church in 1884.

Over 130 years later we are very grateful to the Barings family for building a church of substance. It has been designated a Grade 2 listed building. Its presence means that there is a tranquil place in the forest where people can find peace and refreshment and connect with the sacred aspects of life.

Revd Gill Hopkins
www.highbeachchurch.org.uk

POETRY CORNER – “DOWN IN THE FOREST”

We thought readers might enjoy “Down in the Forest”, a poem published in the Christmas 1939 edition of *The Siren*, the staff magazine of Essex County Council, and inspired by Queen Victoria's 1882 dedication: “It gives me the greatest satisfaction to dedicate this beautiful forest to the enjoyment of my people for ever.”

Oh, who will o'er the countryside
(The Epping-Hainault sector),
And roam the forest far and wide
With me as her protector?
The others they are all half-
canned,
But I'm, a sober fellow:
Come out, and we'll go hand in
hand
And paint the Green Belt yellow.

Oh, I will wear my dungarees,
And you your navy slacks,
And I will chase you round the
trees
And give you pick-a-backs;
I know the spring is far away,
And bitter winds are blowing,
But who e'er saw so bleak a day
Wild oats were not for sowing?

Now need we of this holiday
One moment wish unspent:
Bethink you, for the games we
play
We have a precedent.
For Queen Victoria the good
Who swerved from virtue never,
Has said “Go to it – in this
wood
Enjoy yourselves for ever.”

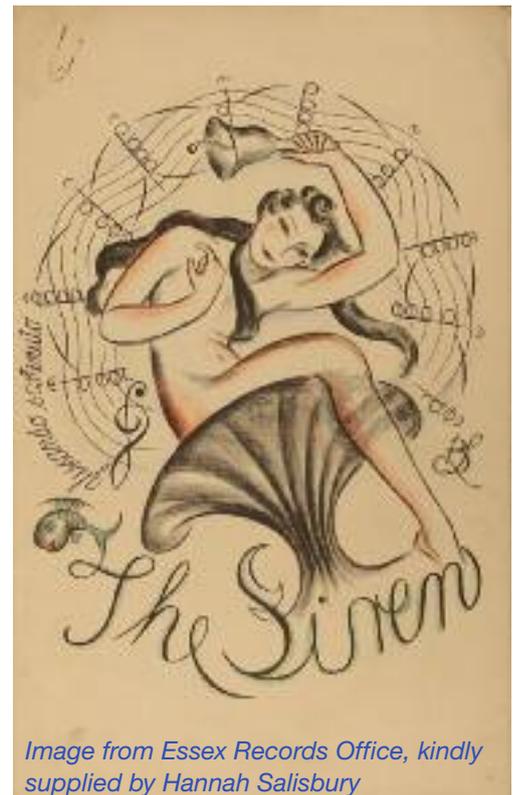


Image from Essex Records Office, kindly supplied by Hannah Salisbury

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Sunday 24 January 10:30 am – 12:30 pm

Debden Green to Dulsmead

Explore this varied part of the Forest and the many changes that have taken place in recent centuries with Verderer Peter Adams. Meet at Debden House car park, Debden Green, IG10 2NZ. Grid ref: TQ438982

Saturday 30 January/Sunday 31 January, 11 am – 2 pm

Big Garden Birdwatch

Drop in to join us at the Visitor Centre at High Beach as we count the birds that come to our feeders on this weekend.

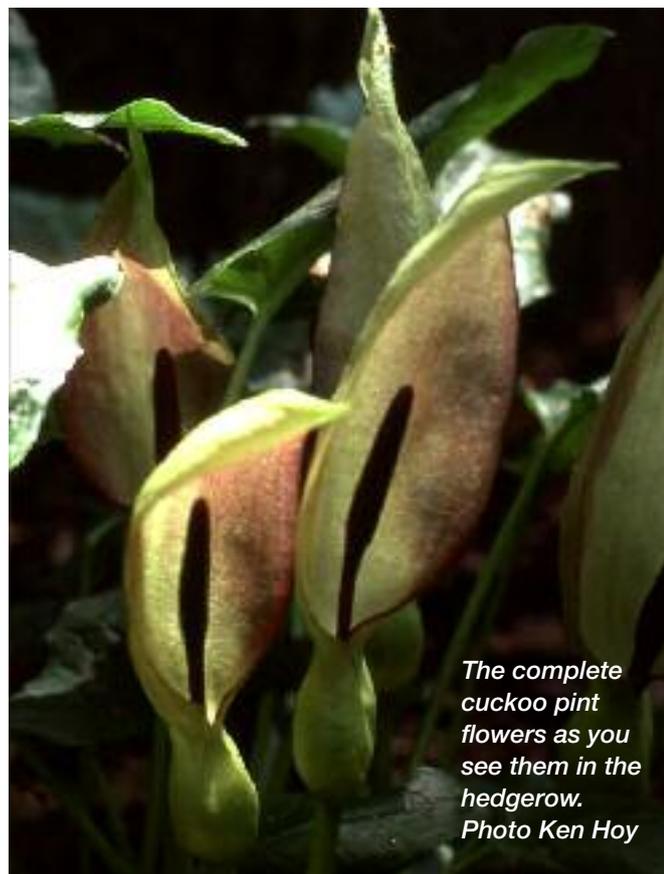
Thursday 24 March 10:30 am – 12:30 pm

Bluehouse Grove and the River Ching

Join naturalist Tricia Moxey to look for signs that winter is at an end. Meet at the entrance to the Forest on the south side of Whitehall Road near to the junction with Brook Rd. Grid ref: TQ399938 Parking in nearby Courtland Avenue.

MYSTERY QUIZ: THE ANSWER

The photograph shows the lower part of the cuckoo pint or arum lily cut open to show how cross pollination occurs and self pollination is avoided. Flies are attracted by a smell of decay and are provided with nectar at the base of the chamber. The pollen they are carrying fertilises the lower “female” part of the flower. The purple coloured “male” part above then erupts with the plant’s own pollen that re-equips the flies, then the entrapping “hairs” wither and allow the flies to escape to fertilise another flower.



*The complete cuckoo pint flowers as you see them in the hedgerow.
Photo Ken Hoy*



Sunday 17 April 10:30 am – 12:30 pm

Spring Migrants on Wanstead Flats

Come and join bird expert Tim Harris for an amble across the Flats to see and hear some of the resident and migratory species in this part of the Forest. Please do bring your binoculars! Meet at the Jubilee Pond car park, off Lake House Road, London E11 3NW. Grid ref: TQ401863

Saturday 7 May 10:30 am – 12:30 pm

Exploring Honeylane Quarters and Beyond

Join Ron and Pat Andrews for a walk from Wake Valley Pond, taking in Sunshine Plain, the Big View and Rushey Plain. Meet at Wake Valley car park, off Epping New Road (A104) on the west side, just south of the Wake Arms Roundabout (Miller and Carter). Grid ref: TQ422989

Tuesday 17 May to Friday 20 May

Discovering Epping Forest

In a joint event with Epping Forest Centenary Trust, we are offering a four-day opportunity for groups with learning, sensory or mobility difficulties to join us for fun activities in the Visitor Centre at High Beach and on the Easy Access Trail. Part of the Loughton Festival. Details from visitorcentre@friendsofeppingforest.org.uk. *Booking essential.*

Sunday 12 June 10:30 am – 12:30 pm

Monks in the Forest

Join Verderer Peter Adams to explore Great and Little Monk Woods in the heart of the Forest. How were the monks involved and what did the woods mean to Loughton residents? Meet at Mount Pleasant car park off the Epping New Road (A104) on the east side, to the south of the Wake Arms Roundabout (Miller and Carter). Grid ref: TQ418982

Saturday 18 June 7.00 pm – 9.00 pm

A Midsummer Evening Walk

Join Sue McKinley for an evening ramble through the woods and fields just north of Upshire. A good time and place for wild flowers and deer, wide skies and sunsets. Meet at the end of Fernhall Lane/Long Street near the junction with the Upshire village road. Grid ref: TL421012. Nearest postcode is EN9 3TA.

Sunday 3 July 10:00 am – 1:00 pm

Exploring the Forest around West Essex Golf Club, Trueloves and beyond

Join Alan Curran to explore the western fringes of the Forest north of Chingford. Meet at Fairmead Oak Car Park, Fairmead Road, High Beach. Grid ref: TQ408968

Anyone thinking ahead to Christmas?

CALLING ALL PHOTOGRAPHERS!

We are hoping to produce Forest Christmas cards 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.

Our previous cards have 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 email any photographs (landscape, please, not portrait) 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 run a programme of guided walks, including the annual Epping Forest Centenary Walk, give talks and, increasingly, work with local groups around the Forest, supporting

some of their activities and contributing a Forest-wide view to local issues and opportunities. We operate the Epping Forest Visitor Centre at High Beach, open Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holidays.

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. Single Membership, £10 a year; Joint/Family Membership, £15 a year.

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