



The Friends of Epping Forest Newsletter



FofEF web-site - www.friendsofeppingforest.org.uk

Summer 2002

Dear Friend,

Perhaps, potentially the most important event to have happened in recent months that affects the Forest is the formation of the 'Epping Forest Liaison Group'. This group includes the Conservators, The Countryside Agency, English Nature, Essex County Council and the London Boroughs of Redbridge, Waltham Forest and EFDC.

One of the first decisions of the Group has been to commission consultants to undertake a nine months study to quantify the environment, social and economic benefits of the Forest. This project, called the 'Quality of Life Capital' aims to identify a 'shared vision' for the Forest and its surroundings that will be invaluable when considering planning applications and other proposals that may threaten the Forest and the landscape. We hope it will be the first step towards acquiring for the Forest a greater protection in terms of planning status.

The Superintendent has said, '...The Corporation of London puts considerable resources and effort into protecting the Forest within its boundaries. Yet outside the Forest, roads are getting busier and noisier and development is looming closer. To get ahead of development and to prevent the Forest becoming a green island we've embarked on a major project aiming to protect the Forest and its surrounding landscape'.

The consultants – Levett & Therivel, (sustainability consultants) – have begun widespread consultations with local individuals and representatives of local bodies and interests. Some of our Committee and other members have taken part in different discussion groups. Reports of those discussions are summarised here.

Harry writes: I attended the workshop on the subject of 'Traffic & Access'. The only people present, apart from Roger Levett and two of his colleagues were representatives from Essex County Council, Lee Valley Park, Redbridge Borough Council and – from the voluntary section – West Essex Ramblers, C P R Essex

(Epping Forest Group) and me. There were no representatives from Epping Forest District Council or from the London Borough of Waltham Forest. This seemed to me to be a very great pity because it is clear that if any real progress is to be made in securing a solution to the problems confronting Epping Forest the full co-operation, one might almost say enthusiastic support, needs to be forthcoming from local government. The following points and varied suggestions were made in the discussion:

1. The London Plan envisages that London Boroughs will develop strategies to bring about reductions in traffic and traffic speeds.
2. The desirability of applying both these aspects to the Epping New Road.
3. However it was pointed out that fencing along the road could militate against the application of a speed restriction.
4. The toll of wildlife taken on all Forest roads but especially the Epping New Road and Woodricken Hill.
5. The enormous traffic generating capacity, potentially affecting the Forest, of the new Sainsbury's Distribution Centre, the new Dowding Road, the inflated housing development at Waltham point (400 instead of 250) and the new massive motel now being built on the Sewardstone Road.
6. The additional threat posed by the construction of the Northern Gateway Access Road (NGAR) – if this gets the 'go-ahead'.
7. The sub-regional study in respect of the M11 corridor now taking place that seems likely to result in some changes in status from a corridor-of-communication to a corridor accepting some development, including the possibility of a new settlement!

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In this issue

Natural Aspect	2	Forest Portrait – April 2002 . . .	6	Walk Reports	9
Fencing	3	Another Natural Aspect		Reply to Members' Letters . .	10
Car Parks & Access	4	Barefoot in the Forest	6	FoEF and CPRE	11
A Licence to Ride		Millennium Wood Project	7	Centenary Walk	11
(an EFRA point of view) . . .	5	Obituary	7	Deer in Chingford	11
Horse-riding Regulations		La Forêt	8	Dates for your Diary	11
Update	6	Firewood	8	AGM Chairman's Report	13

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8. The above (6) needs to be coupled with the London Plan that also envisages a corridor of economic activity along the Lea Valley linking to an M11 corridor continuing to Cambridge. (*We have also learnt that Harlow is making proposals to virtually double its size from a population of 80,000 to 160,000*) All of this has implications for the Forest area and traffic generation.
9. The increased importance of north-facing slip roads at the Debden interchange on the M11 in reducing traffic on the A121, was emphasised. A suggestion was also made that an access to and from the M25 at Bell Common could make a contribution toward reducing through traffic in the Forest (at this horrendous suggestion Harry was heard to 'Ho-hmm'!)
10. The importance of the lanes linking the Forest to the Sewardstone Road (Dawes Hill, Mott Street and Avey Lane) not being subject to any increase in traffic levels perhaps by classifying them as 'Quiet Lanes'.
11. Resumption of the bus-service from Chingford at week-ends and perhaps from other local stations.
12. The importance of improving access to Forest paths from bus-stops.
13. The creation of public transport links between the Lea Valley and Epping Forest.
14. The closure to traffic of minor roads through the Forest such as the Fairmead Road (south of the car park) and the Wake Road etc.

Irene Buchan attended the 'Focus Group' that was concerned with 'economic activity related to Epping Forest'. Also present were two planning officers from London Borough of Waltham Forest, a planning officer from London Borough of Redbridge, there was also a representative from the C P R Essex (Epping Forest), the Publican of the 'Forest Gate' PH. on Bell Common, Epping and Bert Miller from the Tea-hut near the Robin Hood. Six other representatives were invited but did not turn up.

The discussion was to consider how important are the economic needs within the Forest? for whom? and what further needs the Forest should help to meet. Consideration was first given to the economic impact of the various uses of the Forest, such as walking, golf, horse-riding, mountain bikes, fishing, services for visitors and other employment.

Roger Stokes (from 'The Forest Gate') and Bert Miller wished to see provision for more car parking, and seasonal extension of this at the 'honey-pots'. Information boards with maps etc. outside pubs and cafes. Buffer land used for production of locally saleable products, small scale timber products and craft goods, encouragement of small scale bed-&-breakfast establishments. Use of the Great Gregories farm barns for craft fairs and farm-markets. All with an emphasis on small scale and with more support from the local Boroughs.

Ken attended the session that considered 'Recreation & Education' within the Forest. Present were representatives from the Epping Forest Museum, The Epping Forest Field Centre, Woodford Green Cricket Club, Epping Forest Riders Assoc., Loughton Historical Soc. He comments that the discussion often focused on some of the same points and problems as those reported in the other two groups as it quickly became free-ranging. There was complete agreement that the

Forest was 'special' and in need of special protective planning status. After discussion there was also an emphasis on encouraging only those recreational activities that are appropriate *in a forest* – with the exception of the traditional activities of golf, cricket and football (Wanstead Flats). It was agreed that other (inappropriate) recreational activities should be provided for elsewhere. Problems presented by the increasing use of mountain bikes in the Forest was discussed and it was suggested that the demand and pressure on the Forest would increase enormously. There was however some disagreement over whether 'buffer land' should be used for extra provision of cycle routes. It was pointed out that the prime purpose of the buffer lands is the protection of the Forest and its wild-life. However on most matters considered – traffic and road threats, need to reduce traffic speed etc – there was a surprising degree of agreement among those present.

Editor

Natural Aspect

I will not say anything about, the warmest winter on record or remark about an early spring, and a wet windy May-into-June, or, how often I had to mow the lawn and how pleased my farmer neighbour is with the rain... no!

But it was a horrible wet day on May 28th when I went to Fairmead Bottom to see the twelve English Longhorn cattle 'turned out' on to the Forest. Although initially they were confined in a 2-3 acre patch (about a hectare, for younger members) by an electric fence. And, as you will read elsewhere, the fence along the Epping New Road is now complete and the cattle are grazing the woods between Chingford and High Beach – they are the first free-ranging cattle to be on the Forest since 1996.



English Longhorn cow

Fences and controversy apart, what might we see beginning to happen? The Longhorns will graze the lush (this year) grassy areas – the plains and clearings. They are expected to vary their diet from grass and include seedling trees and bushes, brambles and even bracken (when it is young and tender) that are spreading and colonising the open areas of the Forest.

Those folk with a 'mature' memory (say, 50 yrs) will know that the Forest then had a much more open aspect. What has changed it? The woodland between Chingford and High Beach contained several small plains, open patches and wide grassy rides. Of course the largest area was Chingford Plain but that has reduced considerably in size on the northern and eastern sides. The smaller plains, Ludgate, Peartree, Almshouse, and Whitehouse Plains together with Fairmead Bottom have all become overgrown – despite occasional clearance work. Some such as Ludgate and Peartree Plains

disappeared completely and the change was comparatively sudden. Two things happened that coincide with this 'increased' growth of trees, bushes and undergrowth that was noticeably happening in the early 1960's. It was in the late 1950's when myxomatosis hit the Forest's rabbit population – and during the early 60's 'rabbit clearance' (by gasing) was still being carried out where they remained on the Forest. (e.g. Chingford Golf Course)

Before the disease almost wiped out the rabbit population it was a very common sight on a summer evening or early morning as you quietly entered any grassy clearing for maybe a dozen or more rabbits to hop away into the bushes. Then the grass in the areas they frequented was often as smooth and short as that on the 'greens' of the Golf Courses. I am sure the loss of rabbits from the Forest was a major factor in bringing about the changed appearance of the woodlands. However, it was about the same time – the early 60's – that the deer, within a few years also largely disappeared from the Forest. Previously they could be seen quite frequently in Fairmead Thicket and the Bury Wood. The Fallow Deer is of course a great browser of bushes and young trees. It was the greatly increased car ownership particularly in the 60's that meant more people could enjoy (and inevitably 'disturb') the previously remote parts of the Forest. Also, for several years an estimated minimum of 18% of the Forest's total deer population were killed annually in road accidents. I am sure these are the two reasons that caused the deer population to fall so suddenly within the Forest itself. To the major impact the loss of these two grazing animals had had – we must add the loss from the Forest of commoner's cattle, that began to take effect in the 80's. Then I think there is sufficient justification to assume these are the main reasons why the Forest grasslands relatively suddenly became overgrown.

The return of traditional cattle gazing, together with an increase of the few rabbits that are again present in the



Peartree Plain - open in 1964 - here in 1974 overgrown with Birch and brambles after the loss of rabbits and deer.



Peartree Plain - 2002 after clearance work

Forest and, the occasional deer that seem to have returned, will, we hope, all have the desired effect and re-introduce greater diversity and stability into the Forest's landscape.

Enjoy the summer – as I write it has yet to come!

Ken Hoy

Fencing *The following letter was received from Robert Levene:*

At a recent committee meeting there was a lively discussion between FoEF Committee members present over the question of the fencing work currently being carried out by the side of Epping New Road from Rangers Road to near the Robin Hood Roundabout.

We were all in support of the re-introduction of cattle into the Forest and supported the Superintendent and

Corporation in this. There were however mixed views amongst the members present over what should be the FoEF reaction to the fencing, none however welcomed the idea of fencing in any part of the Forest.

It was agreed that committee members were free to write to the newsletter to seek members views, and indeed to express their own views, thus this letter.

I am personally opposed to the fencing for several reasons:

1. A fence changes the character of the Forest – changing forest to park (as at Wanstead Park).
2. I believe the Epping Forest Act is clear that fencing is 'illegal'. The Corporation is in my view, fully aware of this by calling the fence a 'barrier' and 'temporary'. Any scheme that uses such systems to circumvent legislation is by its nature suspect.
3. If the cattle need a fence to stop them getting into the road, why is it open ended?
4. The Corporation, in conjunction with the owner of the cattle, is employing a herdsman to stop the cattle straying and they will be corralled at night. If there is a herdsman why do we need a fence as well?
5. The fence has gaps for walkers and horses at certain points, but will the deer find these in their quick dash across the Epping New Road, or will they be trapped and more exposed to the traffic? The deer are increasing once again in this area of the Forest and anything that increases the danger to them is more than unfortunate.
6. The Superintendent says the fence will be quickly overgrown so will not be so unsightly. A fence is a fence whether planted or made from sawn wood, the effect is the same. In 1878 at the time of the Epping Forest Act one means of 'enclosure' was just this sort of method.

The initial proposal is to graze about 10 –12 English Long Horns, that I am certain will look great on the forest. The area involved may sustain more. But to have a real impact on the Forest and to really affect the scrub that has grown since we lost cattle on the Forest, will mean restoring numbers to that of 15 – 20 years ago. This means 100's not 10's. If we need a fence for 10, does this mean large areas of fencing in all the areas where cattle are reintroduced. This is my biggest worry. Will the use of fencing at this location, if successful lead to other areas of fencing throughout the Forest. If cattle return to Whipps Cross and Wanstead Flats can this be done only by fencing these areas?

It is no use objecting to the fencing if there were no other solution. There is however another solution that is not just an alternative but a much better alternative that improves the forest and works for much larger numbers of cattle.

The reason given for the fencing is the danger caused by speeding traffic on Epping New Road. Instead of fencing let us address the real problem – the volume and speed of traffic.

Traffic has increased on this stretch of road in the last few years, much going towards the M25 Waltham Abbey junction to 'save' time and avoid the congestion if going up the M11 to join the M25. Woodridden Hill and the whole of that area of the Forest has become a noisy, polluted, poorer area as a result. The solution is to directly address this problem – traffic on Epping New Road. Introduce a speed limit to 20 mph – 30 mph. Create physical slow/pinch points as has been done so successfully at High Beach. Thus making it safer for cattle, walkers, riders as well as the wildlife and making a major contribution to the whole environment of this part of the forest.

The motorists will soon go back to using the M11/M25 if they perceive that route is quicker.

Also motorists will soon get used to cattle around the forest as they did for the decades before BSE made them uneconomic. I am worried that if this experiment is deemed to be a success, the use of fencing will become the norm and a reason for not addressing the real issue of traffic. Then indeed the opposite effect will be achieved.

I hope this letter will create interest, debate and response from members and all those interested in the future of Epping Forest.

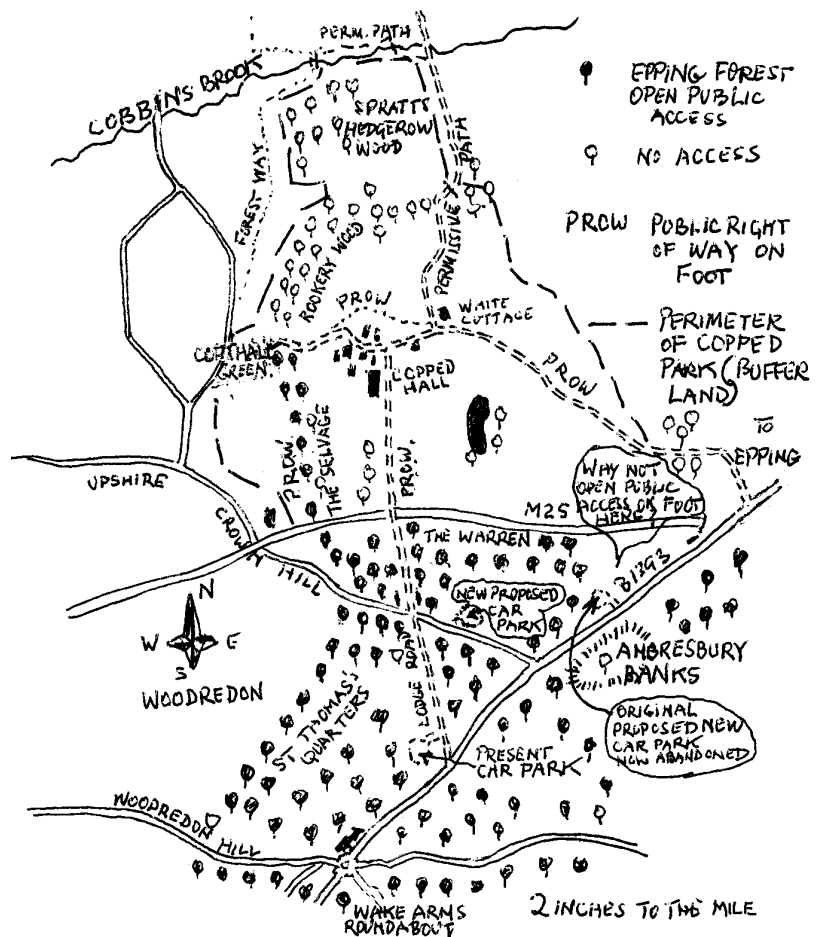
Robert Levene (Committee member, but on this occasion expressing a personal view)

Car Parks & Access

Since 1998, when Lodge Road was closed to traffic, it has been a pleasure to walk along this historic and age-old route to the 'London Gates' of the Copped Hall estate, using the car park at the Epping New Road end.

It is true that as well as attracting walkers intending a pleasant stroll through St Thomas's Quarters and/or Copped Hall, the car park has been targeted by anti-social elements bent on dumping used tyres and assorted rubbish. Attempts by the Conservators to deal with the latter by placement of a gate that is open (mostly!) only during the day, seems as far as I know to have been successful.

The Friend's expressed view has been that the preferred way of dealing with the problem would be to put a height restriction next to the gate so that the car park is permanently available to cars but not to lorries. But it is apparently not acceptable to put a height restriction on the road itself which continues to be used as a bridleway.



Now the Conservators propose to deal with the situation by closing the Lodge Road car park altogether. It was initially proposed to create a new replacement car park on the western side of the Epping New Road between the road and the eastern end of Warren Wood, but due to protests from various quarters this proposal was dropped.

The Conservators have now decided that the replacement car park should be sited on the north side of Crown Hill between the London Gates of Copped Hall and the Epping New Road.

In my view the arguments used to oppose the siting of the car park on the eastern edge of Warren Wood (Epping New Road) apply with equal validity to a car park along Crown Hill. Warren Wood is a sensitive area for deer and it is difficult to see how dogs and their walkers accessing it from one car park will be any less detrimental to the deer than from the other car park. It can also be said that such a car park will throw an additional traffic burden on the already 'difficult' Crown Hill/Epping New Rd. junction. In these circumstances why do the Conservators feel the need to prevent the use of the historic Lodge Road route to Copped Hall and go to the trouble and expense of closing one and creating another car park?

The answer is said to be that having purchased a large part of the Copped Hall Estate and incorporated more than a hundred acres of Warren Wood into Epping Forest it is felt that car park provision should be made to assist the public to visit the area.

One cannot argue with this as a general proposition or in terms even of car parking but why apply it to just a part of Warren Wood. A car park on Copthall Green would encourage access onto the Conservator's Copped Hall Park – especially if the footpath network was improved. Furthermore it would be of benefit if public access on foot was provided on the field where the original car park was to be sited – between the Warren Wood and the Epping New Road. When the Conservators purchased Copped Hall Park in 1992 they made some welcome additions to the pedestrian access to the Estate. They provided a permissive footpath from the White Cottage to Cobbins Brook and negotiated a linking permissive footpath along the north side of the Brook to join up to The Forest Way – long-distance path. Welcome as it was, the permissive path righted a previous wrong since prior to the 1950's when the Copped Hall Estate was run as a sporting agricultural estate by the Talbot Trust a footpath existed from the White Cottage to Parvill's Lane! Alas it was not recorded (or was purposely excluded!) as a public footpath on the Definitive Map.

At the time (1992) of the acquisition of the Copped Hall 'buffer' lands by the Conservators, the Friends suggested to the Conservators some improvements to the footpath network, particularly the extension of the Selvage Path through Rookery Woods to join up with the new permissive path – however this did not happen. The Superintendent, in his lecture at Hawkey Hall in February, used some inspiring language in support of London's Green Belt. He quoted from the Countryside Agency's strategy document that 'all country in and around towns should be managed to maximum environmental, social and economic benefits'. This, he said, 'is far from the case at the moment, in fact in parts of the Green Belt it is almost the opposite that is true'. This is a challenge for the Conservators on their buffer-land!

We now know that this, in part, was leading up to the proposal to use buffer land as winter quarters for cattle that would be turned out during the summer on the Forest.

But surely the purposes for which the buffer lands were acquired require more for their fulfilment than just the provision of a temporary home for cattle and a few enlarged field margins?

'Remember', declared the Superintendent, the words of Alderman John Bedford to the Court of Common Council, 'secure to the people for the purposes of health and recreation'. He was referring to the Forest of course, but I am sure he would have added, 'this applies to the buffer land as well', had the City had any at the time.

Harry Bitten

A Licence to Ride (an EFRA point of view)

'It gives me the greatest satisfaction to dedicate this beautiful Forest to the use and enjoyment of my people for all time' said Queen Victoria in 1882, a statement which was to become the battle cry of horse riders in their fight with the Conservators over whether they should be charged to ride in the Forest.

When the horse riding registration was first mooted some 12 or so years ago, horse riding was on the increase in the Forest and was an activity which could be readily identified as one causing damage to the unique flora and fauna of the Forest, or so said many people who perceived it thus.

Horse riders then, as now, could be divided into several different groups; those who would be happy to pay for the privilege of riding in the Forest; those who would pay but who would want something in return, i.e. better tracks, ideally free of walkers and cyclists; and those who were going to fight against the scheme to the bitter end because Queen Victoria has given them the right of access for all time. (If only!) These groups still exist but the ratio between them has changed such that they are now probably equal in number whereas previously the latter group had been in the majority.

The Epping Forest Riders Association (EFRA) decided at the beginning, rightly or wrongly, on a policy favouring the latter group and thus for many years fought a long hard battle to have the proposed scheme dropped.

Since then circumstances in the Forest have changed; the increase in cyclists, the problems of fly tipping and car dumping and the decrease in horse rider numbers persuaded the present EFRA committee to suggest to their membership that a different approach should be undertaken. Whilst EFRA still has a policy of resisting a Registration scheme because, as the representative body for horse riders, it considers that the scheme is unnecessary and will not achieve its desired object, i.e. that of identifying those few riders who continually disregard the existing Byelaws by riding off limits; it was felt that the Associations attitude was counter productive to the overall conditions in the Forest and, furthermore, did not portray horse riders in a very good light.

Consequently, against a backdrop of a national registration scheme due to be implemented by the Government, probably next year, it was decided that we should accept a principle of a scheme but make some, in our view, sensible suggestions to make the scheme more efficient and user friendly.

The proposed Byelaws were drafted over ten years ago by, it would appear, someone who had little practical

knowledge of how horse riding was undertaken in the Forest and who also managed to insert some ridiculous 'loopholes' into the draft which will cause unnecessary restrictions for the riders and difficulties for the Warren officers who have to enforce the provisions.

EFRA has therefore put forward a list of practical suggestions that, in the Association's view will make for an efficient and easily enforced set of Byelaws which horse riders will agree to abide by. The Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has also written to the Conservators detailing the objections received during the consultation process and the next stage is awaited with interest!

One thing is certain; EFRA considers that the whole thing has been going on for far too long and although, obviously, we would like to see the scheme dropped, we have to live in the real world. We hope that our suggestions will be viewed sympathetically and acted on in order to achieve a compromise that will go some way to appeasing everyone's views whilst producing a sensible, easily workable, set of Byelaws

Addendum

Since the above was written the Conservators decided, at a recent meeting, to implement the proposed Byelaws as they stand. We understand, however, that various ratification processes have to be fulfilled before they can be implemented and which could take another year or so.

The membership of EFRA has now to decide how it wants to handle the situation - it could proceed with a Judicial Review (at a cost of around £100,000!) or it could decide to show maturity by working with the Superintendent and Conservators to ensure a smooth implementation and subsequent compliance of the Byelaws. I trust that horse riders will take the latter course.

Adrian Liddle (Epping Forest Riders Association)

Horse-riding Regulations – Update

At the time of writing (mid-June) the situation regarding Regulations for Licensing of Horse Riding in the Forest is as follows: The further objections and representations that were made to the Department of the Environment (DEFRA) have been passed once again to the City Corporation for their comments or possible further amendment of the proposed Byelaws in view of the objections.

The Corporation has been considering the matter through a Reference Sub-Committee that, we understand, has powers to act. This Sub-Committee will meet soon and, we further understand, is not inclined to make further amendments. If there is a decision before this Newsletter 'goes to press' we will include it as a Stop Press item.

Stop Press (19th June):

The Reference Sub-Committee has now met and decided that it has no wish to make any further amendments to the Byelaws and wishes them to be processed and subsequently to come into effect. It is notable that the objections contained no positive proposals for amendments. The next stage is, we hope, for the Department to recommend to The Ranger of Epping Forest – The Duke of Gloucester – that he approves the Byelaws.

Ken Hoy

The following article by Verderer Peter Adams, appeared in the West Essex Gazette on 5th April 2002. We thought it expressed a point of view that would interest our readers and we requested permission to reprint it here.

Forest Portrait – April 2002

The Epping Forest Act of 1878 provides for the Forest to be an open space for the recreation and enjoyment of the public. It also imposes on the Conservators two prime duties to carry out in their management of the Forest. These are, that they should keep it uninclosed, and that they should preserve the natural aspect. The former is a subject for another day, and the latter is possibly the most fiercely debated topic in the Forest.

In preserving the natural aspect Parliament clearly did not mean that natural forces would have to be allowed to proceed unchecked, because the Act goes on to give the Conservators the power to carry out management works. However, there is a clear intention that the Forest should be a natural place as distinct from a manicured landscape such as a municipal park or a farm. We all know that there is a trend for parks to be less formal than they once were and that some farms are more wildlife friendly than others. Nevertheless the distinction is still a good one.

The amount and nature of the management that is necessary varies from time to time. Dutch Elm disease, the death of rabbits from Myxamatoxosis and the extensive fires in the summers of 1975-76 were events outside the Conservators control that needed urgent, extensive action and will have an on-going impact for many years to come. There are a relatively small number of horse riders and mountain bikers and yet both groups have a disproportionately large impact on the management of the Forest and its enjoyment by the large majority of visitors.

On the other hand, much management work is within the control of the Conservators, and such works are subject to changes in fashion as in other walks of life. Up to the 1970s management largely involved thinning the woodlands, but since then it has become increasingly interventionist, with chainsaws, excavators and bulldozers sadly being common sightings.

If the natural aspect is preserved, the hand of the Forest managers should be for the most part unseen. We do not want a sanitised landscape where you can go for a walk in slippers. Children's playgrounds, sign-posted walks and artificial footpaths have their place, but it is not on the Forest. We must not think of the Forest in the same way as we would a country park, a farm or a municipal park. The Forest is and must remain a special place where, despite the proximity of London, one can enjoy a wilderness experience.

Another Natural Aspect – Barefoot in the Forest

'Please come suitably dressed for the weather and Forest conditions.' So runs the advice at the end of our walk's diary. Exactly! I do just that! Peggy has asked me if I would write a short piece about my, perhaps unconventional, interpretation of this advice.

I've been a keen Forest walker for more than 35 years. Now I am retired, I try to walk there once or twice a week all through the year. Summer or winter, wet or dry, I *always* walk barefoot. I know all of us enjoy the Forest a great deal. The sights, sound and scents, and their change with the weather and the seasons, are a continual delight. But I have another very special personal pleasure; I *touch* the Forest too! As I walk, I delight in continually feeling it under the soles of my feet. There are so many varying ground textures to be felt underfoot, changing from place to place and from moment to moment. Every

step brings with it a different sensation. All of this would be completely lost to me if I wore boots.

There are some practical points as well. I think I do minimal damage to the Forest. A bare foot is soft and leaves hardly any impression on the ground. My footprints are almost invisible amongst the marks of hard boots. As well as that, I can walk much more quietly unshod. Once I was able to approach within a very few feet of a fox; the animal was totally oblivious to my presence. My bare feet on the soft ground made no sound at all. And, of course, for a lazy chap like me it's good not to have any boots to clean!



THEY LOOK LIKE THE TRACKS OF AN ELDERLY MALE FRIEND OF EPPING FOREST

I have gone barefoot for so many years now that I am hardy enough to walk quite long distances. I have done the entire Centenary Walk three times so far – totally barefoot. I am confident enough not even to carry any back-up footwear with me. I often get into conversation with other walkers and I have many interested and appreciative comments. Here are some of things we have talked about:

No, my feet don't get cold, even on winter days. Brisk walking keeps the circulation going – and I haven't caught a cold since 1993!

It doesn't hurt! After many years of barefoot walking I've got a layer of 'personal leather' on my soles. (But if you feel like trying it start with a short walk. It *will* hurt if you attempt ten miles the first time you leave your boots and socks off!)

I don't have a problem with broken glass or thorns. I may get the odd scratch, but I don't go tramping through brambles or thorn bushes. (What environmentally-conscious walker would want to do that anyway?) The foot is as sensitive and responsive as the hand and I can take instant evasive action if I feel I am about to step on something sharp (and there's the 'personal leather'.)

I don't get blisters, corns, athlete's foot or similar foot 'nasties'. And, remember, 'Nature's hiking boots' fit perfectly.

'You've got the best idea in all this mud!' Yes, I'm sure I have. Wearing shorts keeps clothes out of harms way; boot maintenance is zero. And thick Forest mud has it's own special sensations for bare feet! In 'Nature's Wellingtons', I'm happy to go for miles in the muddiest of forest conditions.

'That looks good; it must feel great?' Yes, it does, why don't you try it?

'You can't take your muddy boots off when you go

into the pub.' No, but I've got two plastic bags to cover my muddy feet. They're each clearly labelled in a familiar trademark script; 'Boots'.

Walking unshod in the Forest all year round is only part of the barefoot lifestyle which I so much value and enjoy. Especially from spring through to autumn I try to be barefoot *everywhere* at every opportunity. There are occasions when I *have* to be shod for reasons of social conformity or 'dangerous work', but these aren't too frequent. I sometimes find I can go for weeks on end without once putting on footwear of any kind. What a joy!

The Internet has revealed that I am not just an isolated eccentric. There is the Society for Barefoot Living – which I've joined. There are more than 50 members in the British Isles. One of our very keen members is a hospital doctor. He's very well informed medically on the advantages (many) and dangers (few) of going barefoot. A group of us meets from time to time for country walks. We may be walking in the Forest later in the year; see if you can find our footprints!

I *do* have a serious commitment to a barefoot way of life. To me it's so comfortable (yes, it really is), enjoyable and, above all, healthy. I enjoy the sensation of being always 'in touch' with the ground I am walking on. It gives me such a sense of freedom and wellbeing; barefoot is my *ideal* way to go.

I've *never* met anyone else walking barefoot in the Forest. Maybe though, someday, I'll bump into another friend who's a dedicated Barefoot Walker.

Edgar Brown

Millennium Wood Project

What with one thing and another, the two schools involved in this project have not been consulted about the date for their hoped-for participation in this year's planting day.

Alas there is no time to do this before this newsletter has to go for printing. It is proposed therefore to select Thursday 17 October as the planting day and hope that this will be acceptable to the schools.

We hope that members will wish to continue to be involved with the project and that they will come to Coopersale Fields to support the two schools on Thursday and on the following Sunday, 20 October for the Friends own planting day. For both days the timing will be 10am–12 noon. However, in view of the uncertainty please contact us on 020 8529 8594 early in October to check that the dates are still correct.

The field is currently waist-high in grass but there are good numbers of oak treelets, especially on the perimeters. Ian Cox, Forest Works Manager and Forester, is shortly planning to mow the wide paths and glades through the area so that the Wood will be delineated.

Harry Bitten.

Obituary

I have to report the sad news of the sudden death on Sunday, 9 June, of John Buchan, Irene's husband and long time Friends of Epping Forest committee member. John was the son of Dr. Forbes Buchan, a well-known Walthamstow GP. He was unlucky to contract Polio when a boy and fought consequent problems all his life with great fortitude.

John and Irene met at what is now Waltham Forest College and were married in 1950 at the Congregational

Church in Orford Road, Walthamstow and have remained members ever since; it now being called Marsh Street and Trinity URC. They have a daughter and son, Janet and David, and two grandchildren, Sarah and Robert. They moved into their present home in Drysdale Avenue, Chingford in 1960.

John was not only a FoEF committee member but made a great contribution, over a whole range of activities, to life in this area. He was a student of photography and professionally involved in his early career. He continued this interest throughout his life and worked it into many of his activities. Some of John's photographs are included in the Friends' Christmas and Greetings card collections. I remember him taking a series of shots at the Robin Hood a couple of years ago at the only Centenary Walk when we had prolonged and serious rain. The depiction of the bedraggled but determined walkers were works of art. That was an example of John's sense of humour. We will miss him and we send our condolences to Irene and her family. John was 73.

Ed.

La Forêt

*Your hair has grown once more
And sunlight stains it golden as before.
You stand so elegant and tall
Green Ladies, ready for the Summer Ball.
The music rises in excited song
From sunrise 'till the light has gone.
The rustling murmurs linger on
And dancing limbs, outstretched and long,
Reach high to touch the August moon.*

Cathy Fowke-Hallett

Firewood

Irene Buchan noticed the following interesting quote in the Waltham Abbey Historical Society's Newsletter. It was reported to the Society by Minnie Fenton and concerned a bequest in the early 17th century to the Minister of Waltham Abbey Church, John Gibbon (or Guibbon) who appears as the Minister of the Church in 1629 and was during his incumbency enriched by a gift from the Earl of Norwich, in the following way:

'I Edward, the Earl of Norwich bequeath to John Guibbon of Waltham Holy Cross in the County of Essex, clerk, for the term of his life, towards the officiating at Waltham Holy Cross, celebrating Divine Service, Administering of the Sacrament, and preaching the word of God there, all that messuage or tenement with orchard now in the tenure and occupation of the said John Guibbon, and also, ten loads of firewood yearly and every year, to be taken of such pollard trees as for the time being shall be standing and growing upon the waste land of the Manor of Waltham Holy Cross within the Forest of Waltham'

Irene comments this is the first time she has come across any statement of the amount of an allocation of wood for fuel.

It refers, of course, to lopped wood from pollards and, depending upon the 'age' of the loppings (the interval since the pollards were last lopped), they could have been branches of a size of 2 – 4 inches in diameter. Ten cart or waggon loads would have involved quite a large number of pollards and such an amount for winter fuel and presumably cooking, would clearly have had a considerable value to be mentioned in such a fashion. The Manorial waste would have included Honey Lane Quarters, St Thomas's Quarters, and the Forest farther east including (at that time?) part of Great Monk Wood. Strangely there is an implied lack of permanence about, '...such pollard trees as for the time being shall be standing and growing...'. However it does mean that pollarding was widespread then – for in many parts of the Manor of Waltham H.C. coppicing also occurred at some time. Coppicing probably ceasing in the 18th century when the coppice poles began to be pollarded instead thus creating the groups of pollards that today have been called 'coppards'. Two centuries earlier coppicing certainly occurred as there are several instances of complaints that the required fencing was



*An ancient group of 'coppards' near Wake Arms.
Once a coppiced tree, now well over a thousand years old.*



*Coppiced woodland – 'stools' several hundred years old,
about 10 years since last cut. Bradford Wood, Essex*

not carried out after each section of the woodland had been re-coppiced. Fencing would have been necessary to prevent deer and cattle from grazing the new shoots on the coppiced 'stool'. Pollarding the trees, of course, allowed the shoots to re-grow from 6–8 feet up the trunk or bole and beyond the reach of grazing animals.

We can only speculate why in the past these two practices happened in our Forest and ask ourselves, was coppicing undertaken as a 'common wood right' (right of Estovers) or was it practised only on assignments granted to individuals? Therefore were the coppiced areas not 'common waste'? Or, were the cattle mainly on the greens and plains within the vicinity of settlements?... but the deer would be frequenting the more distant woodlands (and how many deer were there?). We might ask, when there were very much smaller populations in the Forest villages, how many cattle were grazing on the 'waste'?

It is an intriguing part of the Forest's history, the trees are still there as evidence. The answers are not easily found, but in quiet spots the historic atmosphere is almost tangible if one can stop, look and wonder!

Ken Hoy

Walk Reports

Walk at High Beach 22nd February

The overnight rain stopped, a few members who had been waiting at the other tea hut arrived and, in total, 24 members set off along the wheelchair path to look at some of the sites that the Epping Forest Conservation Volunteers (EFCV) have maintained over the 25 years of their existence. As we joined Rushey Plain, we could see the recently cleared space which the Volunteers chose as their contribution to last year's 'Make a Difference Day'.

Passing quickly through some muddy bits we were pleased to see the sun as we came to the area which was one of the first repollarded some 25 years ago by the then newly formed Volunteers. This gave our group a good example of just how much of the Forest looked when it was being worked for winter fuel in the 19th century. After passing Wake Valley Pond we skirted Sunshine Plain, one of the few remaining areas of wet heathland left in Essex and were pleased to see the large amount of heather growing, again mainly due to work carried out over many years by EFCV.

To the Wake Arms and then Dulsmead Hollow, surely one of the least visited areas of the Forest, and so to the Furz Ground, radically changed, mostly by EFCV and the Centenary Trust work parties of young people, for many their first introduction to Epping Forest. This valuable scheme makes a large contribution to the wellbeing of the Forest. Then back to High Beach via the Green Ride where the general comment of the walk was 'I had no idea the volunteers had done so much work'.

Derek Meakin

Walk from Fairmead Plain car park 24 April 2002.

Some 30 of us gathered in the car park, the land of which was once part of the enclosure of New Lodge, taken from the Forest in the 1300s for a Royal Hunting Lodge, later owned and lived in by members of the Sotheby family, Lords of the Manor, and then converted into a place of refreshment. By the time the Corporation of London took over it was decided that retaining it would be more trouble than it was worth and the building and fences were pulled down in the late 1800s. Traces of this previous life can still be discerned by changes in vegetation and

the remains of ditches that marked hedgerows and boundaries. Across the Fairmead road the cattle-drovers pond with its raised banks, sloping 'drive-in' and no obvious source of its water drew attention.

One of the most interesting parts of the afternoon was our walk parallel to the main A104 road where a path had been cleared northwards from the Plain, including the thicket lining the road, to make way for fencing to prevent the new cattle, from the grazing experiment about to begin, from straying into the path of fast traffic. In one place, some of the prickly brash from the clearance had been put beside the bank below the road – a less obtrusive solution to fencing? Workmen were installing gates for horses, pedestrians and forest vehicles.

On that day the clearance petered out just south of the Robin Hood roundabout. We turned left to Bert's café (no stop though) and made our way to the horse ride, and then through the Beech Wood to find the site of the 1830s Church of St Paul's and the church field, which had been given to the church by the Lord of the Manor and returned to the Forest when the present impressive Church of the Holy Innocents was built on Forest land – in the late 19th century – possibly in anticipation of the coming of the railway to High Beach and a great increase in the population. Look out for a future walk by one of our member railway enthusiasts.

A really good spring day with the new green leaves everywhere, defoliating caterpillars swinging from their threads from the trees, catkins, some fungi, mosses, ferns – something for everyone – except a cup of tea!

Irene Buchan

Walk in Knighton Woods and Lords Bushes 24th May

It was raining at eight, and at nine, but by ten thirty there was sunny intervals. the rain had stopped, and although a bit breezy, it was not a bad morning for a walk.

About 13 members were there, with two newcomers who had been told at the EFIC about this walk, so all sixteen (including 'Him', the leader) set off just after the appointed hour to firstly look at the Pulpit Oak, a venerable old tree, showing its age (four – five hundred years?) but from where it is still possible to stand within the top of the boiling (trunk of a pollard) and preach to the congregation. However he refused to demonstrate (said he was too old) but he did mention that it was probably a boundary pollard, since, as we stood in the track known as Monkams Lane some of us were in London, and some in Essex. (or, some in Woodford and some in Buckhurst Hill).



The Pulpit Oak, Lords Bushes

Then on through Lords Bushes to look at one of the ponds created by those in times past digging for gravel to mend the local roads. This part of the Forest has probably been woodland for the last 10,000 years, but encroachments have reduced it to what it is now, enclosures taking place as late as 1779 when Tom Nicholson of the Bald Faced Stag was ordered to remove a fence (but he never did so), and Buckhurst Hill cottage hospital was built in 1868 on some 16 acres of enclosed land.

The walk continued through a large stand of close growing silver birch trees colonising the burnt ground which had resulted from the severe drought period in 1975 and 1976, but he did point out that there were many young oak and beech coming up, and which in a few years time will overshadow the birch.

Then he took us to the children's playground near Princes Road. As none of us were children this was a bit of a puzzle, until he explained that the Princes Retreat had been nearby, (large enough to seat 500 folk at one sitting) and the Forest land had been used for donkey rides and swings. During wartime a large underground air raid shelter had been constructed under this site (some of the brick wall to the ventilation shaft is still visible) and subsequently the local authority has gained permission to build the present playground.

Then south through the Bushes, admiring the very distorted hornbeams which proliferate in these woods, and trying to identify all the birds we could hear. We saw very few, but a pair of great spotted woodpeckers did show themselves, and he did tell us we were listening to robins, wrens, chiff-chaffs, willow warblers; a garden warbler, crows, magpies, and he thought we just had a glimpse of a sparrow hawk to which the crows' noisiness had drawn our attention.

Then to cross Monkham Lane, but he stopped again to tell us about the railway. No, not the Central Line which is just half a kilometre to the east, but a steam train and track which was tested here in 1872, before being sent to Portugal at the order of the Lisbon Steam Tramways Co.Ltd. He said the tracks were flat timbers laid end to end, and the steering was by a central steel rail on either side of which guide wheels attached to the locomotive kept the train on its tracks. The loco was named Cintra, and one of our group told us this was the name of a village near to Lisbon. However neither Lisbon nor Cintra (or Sintra) ever saw this tram, for although the trials in Monkham Lane were a success, the steamship on which the train put to sea was in a collision and sunk.

Then into Knighton Woods. These too are ancient woodland, but at one time were enclosed and formed part of the Knighton Estate owned by Edward North Buxton. Hence the number of oldish yew trees (which in the unenclosed woodland would have been felled because they are toxic to cattle) and the exotic species such as Corsican pine, red oak, rhododendrons, grey poplar and bamboo. Nevertheless, there are indicators that this woodland is also ancient since within it there are old pollard hornbeams, wild service trees and butchers broom. All of these we passed on our way up to the largest pond (almost a lake) in these two parts of Epping Forest.

This was excavated by North Buxton as an ornamental boating lake around the 1880's (and our leader said he could remember the old wooden landing stage) and it is thought that the cost was £120, but since the arisings were gravel, Elizabeth French, who was just starting her cartage and civil engineering business at the time, paid

North Buxton £110 for the privilege of taking it away. So this was a fairly cheap 'lake' which we can flow all enjoy since the 1930's when Knighton Wood passed into the ownership of the Corporation.

Then a look at the artificial rocks decorating the lake, and the oak growing within a beech coppiced stool on the bank, and we were back to our starting place.

We thanked him for the walk and talk, and for keeping the rain off, and said we would all be on the next Friends outing.

Your ACE Reporter.

Reply to Members' Letters

Since the November Newsletter we have had several interesting letters from members that unfortunately we have not had space to print or comment upon until now. Apologies to those members.

Mr Alan W Smith writes about the Easter Hunt, sometimes called the Epping Hunt. He comments that whatever the actual legal facts that exist, the Mayor and citizens of London, for centuries, considered they had a right to hunt in the Forest – if only once a year. He also mentions another ancient custom dating from Candlemas Day 1274, when the Dean of St Pauls and Sir Wm. Baud, an Essex knight agreed that in exchange for a grant of land at West Lee he would present the canons with a doe on the Feast of the Conversion of St Paul and a buck at the Feast of the Commemoration of St Paul. Upon these occasions the body of the deer was baked but the head, on a pole, led the procession. He goes on to say there are in the Middle Ages many similar rituals that may well be Saxon in origin and speculates whether this is connected to the origins of the Easter Hunt in Epping Forest. (Mr Smith mentions that he has written a full account of these customs in 'Folklore' Vol 3 Spring 1962)

Mrs Kathleen Iassac writes from Oxford, although she was born and once lived in High Beech Road, Loughton. She recalls many happy hours walking and picnicking in the Forest. She also mentions taking a regular shortcut through the Forest and crossing Staples Brook which 'became a raging torrent in the winter'. Her long letter is extremely interesting and contains a great deal of valuable information about old Loughton and some of its inhabitants. With her agreement I propose to pass it on to Loughton Historical Society.

Mrs Brenda Perridge writes from North Weald about 'Bricks, Tiles & Flower Pots'. She enclosed a short article she wrote for the Journal of the East of London Family History Soc. in 1998. When she was gardening and sorting through old clay flower pots, she found one with an inscription 'G & A Tuck Waltham Abbey Pottery'.

This was the Pottery in Wood Green Lane, Upshire where I was curious about the source of its clay. She researched the Pottery and established that it was founded in 1830 by H.F.Walker, managed by Geo. Symondson, and, in 1908 taken over by George & Arthur Tuck. They made 21 different sizes of flower pots, roof tiles and bricks and were apparently connected with 'Monkham Brickfield'. I wonder if this refers to the Monkham Hall estate to the north of Cobbin's Brook.

I see the Chapman-Andre map (1772-4) names nearby Claverhambury, as 'Claying Bury'; another map 30 yrs later calls it 'Claybury' and 80 years later still, it has become the name we use today. I can find no other connection to brick-making in the area of Monkham.

Mrs F E Nicholson writes from Henham, also about flower-pot making. She refers to the pottery and brickworks in Folly Lane, Walthamstow. She remembers it from the mid-1930's when owned by the uncle of a friend. The name was Pettit. As Mrs Nicholson remembers it was still just operating as '...a few old sheds with flower pots strewn around – not exactly a thriving business from its appearance' but from what she gathered '...some kind of living was made though'.

Mrs Nicholson continues that she and her husband lived in Holly Drive, N, Chingford, from when they were married in 1939 until soon after he died and she moved in 1975. She also recalls the two weeks she spent in the Suntrap Maternity Home during the war when she gave birth to her daughter.

I remember Ted Nicholson ('Nick') as a popular and active naturalist in the Forest and Lea Valley. For many years he was Secretary of the Chingford Branch of the London Natural History Society. I know he was well known to several members who were active 'young naturalists' in the 40's and 50's. I remember an escapade where when he was bird watching on the King George Reservoir (it was 'illegal' but there was a hole in the fence) he was chased – I can't remember if he was caught – and tore his trousers on the fence. Nick usually wore 'plus-fours'. It was just after the war and there was a rumoured threat that the water was going to be poisoned by the IRA. Chingford was the home base of many good naturalists. Joseph Ross, Walter Wright, Edwin Pinniger, Bernard Ward (who became a Verderer) and others who I won't embarrass as they may read this! Ted Nicholson was contemporary with them all.

Ken Hoy

FoEF and CPRE

All you good conservationists know that CPRE stands for the Council for Protection of Rural England. Formed over 70 years ago, it has consistently fought for the care of England's green and pleasant land. More recently it has become concerned with the improvement of our towns and cities to slow down the migration into the countryside and thus to reduce the need to build on greenfield sites. It is also fighting to increase the percentage of houses being built on brownfield areas.

Epping Forest is borderland, being countryside but on the edge of the capital. CPRE therefore, has a double interest in the protection of the Forest and the improvement of London to prevent urban sprawl.

The country is divided by CPRE into Regions and Counties and in some cases, such as London, into smaller District groups. Members can decide to which area they wish to belong. Being on an edge, members of the Friends of Epping Forest who live in Redbridge or Waltham Forest can belong to CPR Essex or the NE London District Group.

CPR Essex is a large powerful group covering the whole of the county, while North East London is smaller and, not having many 'countryside campaigners' in its mainly urban membership, finds it hard to recruit enough members to support its important work.

Any members of FoEF who live in Redbridge or Waltham Forest and are not yet part of this nation-wide environmental body will, we hope, feel that membership is important and on joining specify North East London as their preferred group.

Details of membership can be obtained from Ken Bray 020 8504 9318 or John Gilbert 020 8531 1742.

Ken Bray

Centenary Walk

This takes place on Sunday, 22 September so there is plenty of time for everyone (including me, I hope) to get fit enough to take part (or arrange a holiday!).

The walk was devised in 1978 to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the passing of the Epping Forest Act 1878, but after a celebratory doing of the walk then, there was something of a lapse in the event. In the mid 80s the Friends and the West Essex Ramblers decided to resume an organised doing of the walk and it has taken place ever since. This will be the 17th year of the series.

The walk starts at the junction of Forest Drive and Capel Road, near Manor Park Station, at 09.00 hours sharp. Thereafter, approximate timing is 10.00 hours centre of Green Man Roundabout, Leytonstone; 10.45 hours County Hotel, Oak Hill, Woodford; 12 noon The Warren Pond car park, Chingford. Lunch will be taken at the Robin Hood PH on the Epping New Road between 13.15 and 14.00 hours. The walk should finish about 17.30 hours at Bell Common, Epping.

The walk is open to anyone or everyone and will also be attended by Forest Officers and members of the Epping Forest and Open Spaces Committee. There will be plenty of stops and pauses on route for short talks on Forest management, history and wildlife.

For further details, ring me on 020 8529 8594.

Harry Bitten

Deer in Chingford

On the morning of the 9th May I was walking with a group of people and entered Yates Meadow at the top (NE) end from the lane by the Scout's Centre at Gilwell. To our astonishment and delight three Fallow deer does came out through the hedge fringing Gilwell Lane. Sparing us a quick glance they trotted down the hill and vanished in the direction of Hawk Wood.

In more years than I care to mention this is the closest I have ever seen deer to Chingford during daylight hours. I have of course often seen old dears shopping in Station Road!

Harry Bitten

Do visit Fairmead Bottom and make the acquaintance of the browsing ladies! See you on summer walks or at various fetes.

Peggy Bitten

Dates for your Diary 2002/03

June 29 Saturday, 12 noon – 5pm: Information and sales stand at Chingford Village Green Fete.

June 30 Sunday, 12 noon – 5pm: Information and sales stand at Thornwood Fete.

July 7 Sunday, 12 noon – 6pm: Information and sales stand at Waltham Forest Green Fair, Lloyd Park, Walthamstow.

July 12 Friday, 10am: A buffer-land walk returning to Upshire. Park in the Upshire Village Hall car park.

Leader: Sue McKinley GR 416011

August 11 Sunday, 2pm: A leisurely walk around the Copped Hall area. Meet in the Lodge Road car park, that is the first turning on the left after the Wake Arms Roundabout if you are travelling north on the B1393 (the Epping New Road).

Leader: Ken Hoy GR 432998

September 8 Sunday, 12 noon – 4pm: Information and sales stand at Forest Festival, Queen Elizabeth Hunting Lodge, Rangers Road, Chingford.

September 22 Sunday, 9am – 5.30pm: Centenary Walk. A days walk through the length of Epping Forest from Manor Park in the south to Epping in the north. Details in newsletter.

Leader: Harry Bitten GR 419860

October 28 Friday, 10am: A walk in the autumn woods near Theydon Bois. Meet in the Jack's Hill car park (north or south) which is about half way along the B172 between the Wake Arms Roundabout and Theydon Bois.

Leader: Pat Bishop GR 435996

November 23 Saturday, 10.30am: National Tree Week. Our annual away from Epping Forest walk. This year it will start in Stanstead Abbots on the edge of the Lea Valley north of Roydon. The five mile circular route crosses farmland and woods, and fords the River Ash, then back to Stanstead Abbots via Easneye Wood.

Meet in the car park in Stanstead Abbots off the B181 between the railway station and the post office. Main roads to Stanstead Abbots are: either A414 (W) from Harlow, then right along the B181 or the A10 (N) then B181 to Stanstead Abbots. Or you can take the scenic route (B181) from Epping through Epping Green and Roydon to Stanstead Abbots.

Leader: Bill Dexter GR 384119

November 29 Friday 8 – 10.30pm: Forest Supper at the Hawkey Hall. Details in the November newsletter.

Other dates for your Diary

Epping Forest Information Centre

Tel: 020 8508 0028

July 11 Thursday 2pm Summer Meadows: A guided walk led by Tricia Moxey and Dr. Amanda Samuels. Meet Raveners Farm, Upshire. **GR 424005**

July 14 Sunday 10.30am – Woodford Heath: A guided walk led by Verderer, Peter Adams. Meet outside Woodford Green Primary School, Sunset Avenue. **GR 402925**

July 17 Wednesday 2pm – A plethora of Insects: A guided walk led by Dr. Jeremy Dagley. Meet at Fairmead car park. **GR 409966**

August 8 Thursday 1 – 4pm. The Green Man: Find out about this old English folk character and make your own 'Green Man'. Family event at Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge.

August 22 Sunday 10.30am – A wander round Warlies: A guided walk led by Forest Keeper, Michael Collins. Meet at "The Barn" car park, Fernhall Lane, Upshire. **GR 417017**

August 29 Thursday 1 – 4pm. 'A Pocket full of Posies': Use herbs and flowers in your own Tudor nosegay. A family event at Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge.

September 8 Sunday 10am. 'Pole Hill and its Literary Associations': A guided walk led by Verderer, Richard Morris. Meet in the car park opposite Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge. **GR 398947**

September 8 Sunday 12 noon – 4pm. 'Forest Festival': Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge. A celebration of the story of Epping Forest including crafts, exhibits and displays about the Forest.
Not to be missed!

September 21 Saturday & 22 Sunday 1 – 5pm. Open-house weekend at the Temple and Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge.

Essex Wildlife Trust (EF Local Group)

(020 8418 0730)

July 14 Sunday 2.30pm – A Wanstead circular walk. Meet at Capel Road, Manor Park, E12, near the Golden Fleece PH. Led by Alan Everett.

EF Conservation Volunteers

This year is our 25th Anniversary and some of the original sites are to be revisited in the following programme:

July 7 Sunday Honey Lane

July 21 Sunday Two Tree Island (Essex Wildlife Trust Reserve on the Essex coast.

July 28 Sunday Fairmead Bottom

August 18 Sunday Wanstead Park

September 1 Sunday Bulrush Pond

September 15 Sunday Lord's Bushes/Knighton Woods

September 29 Sunday Oak Hill Pond

Meet 9.30am for 9.45am at the Warren, the Forest Headquarters on the Epping New Road.

If staying all day you will need food and drink. Wear practical clothing and footwear. If necessary you will be shown how and what to do.

Friends of Suntrap and Hawkwood Field Study Centres

July 6 Saturday 10.30am – Summer Forest Walk. Meet near the Wheelwrights PH at Chingford Hatch (357 or 212 bus) finishing in Station Road, Chingford from where the 212 bus will get you back to the start if needed. Led by Pat and Ron Andrews

September 28 Saturday 10.30am – Autumn Forest Walk. Meet at Jack's Hill car park half way along the B172 from Wake Arms Roundabout to Theydon Bois. Led by Ken Hoy **TQ 435995**

October 23 Saturday 1 – 5pm - Suntrap Open Day.

Waltham Forest Civic Society

September 7 – 10 Heritage Open Days (the scheme that opens up interesting buildings outside London to the public).

September 9 Sunday 12 noon – 2pm Ned Ellis leads a walk round Ainslie Wood, ancient woodland in the heart of Chingford.

September 22 & 23 – London Open House in which buildings are opened up to the public without charge. A free copy of the directory will be available from local libraries from the first week of September.

The Council For Protection of Rural Essex (CPRESSEX)

July 28 Sunday. Open garden 2.30 – 4.30pm. Gestingthorpe Hall. Sudbury. Advance booking essential. Tickets £2.50.

August 9 Friday. Supper Evening 6.30 – 9pm. Knights Farm, Buntings Green. Light supper and wine evening. Advance booking essential. Tickets £12.50.

Tickets for both the above events available from: CPRESSEX, The Garden Office, 79 Springfield Road Chelmsford, CM2 6JG. Tel. 01245 - 268667

Chairman's Report to the Annual General Meeting, 29th June 2002

This year there are three or four major issues with which the Committee has been involved that affect the Forest.

In my view most significant of these is the future development and threat of something that I spoke about last year – the increasing urbanisation of the areas around the Forest. I suppose one could say this is a process that has been happening for centuries, but it has accelerated immensely during the last few decades. One factor in particular has caused this. It is of course the hugely increased ownership of cars and of traffic generally.

During the 1960's this had an effect on the Forest's wildlife as the public were able to reach the hitherto more remote areas of the Forest. But the potential threats that this posed for the Forest were not fully realised until the 1970's when we, and other organisations, became aware of the demands for road improvements and motorways increased, and then we became deeply involved. It affected traffic by the changed possibilities of where one could live and work, and with greater affluence development pressures on the rural surrounds of the Forest increased. The Corporation of the City of London as Conservators of the Forest became aware of the dangers and thankfully were persuaded to acquire the 'buffer lands' to protect the Forest's integrity. Recently the retiring Superintendent of the Forest thought it appropriate to conclude his 23 year's experience of managing the Forest by reporting the gathering dangers and advocating co-operative action with the surrounding Local Authorities.

Under the new Superintendent, and the new administration this awareness has continued and - now I come to the point - where we believe this is a most significant development this year. Meetings with officers of Local Authorities and other interested bodies have taken place and now a Liaison Group has been formed. Consultants have been engaged to report by the end of the year on the environmental, social and economic benefits of the Forest and the factors affecting it. Maybe we all already know what these are, but decision-making bodies feel they need independent reports and statistics before they can come to decisions.

An immediate objective must surely be to secure agreement on some sort of strategic traffic plan for the area, which one hopes would include speed restrictions. A longer term objective must be to obtain increased protection for the Forest and its neighbouring areas in terms of Planning Status – perhaps together with the Cobbins Brook and Lea Valleys; some form of landscape protection status. The cynics among us may say, 'it's a bit ruddy late' when thinking of the Sainsbury monstrosity and the traffic it will generate! But lets be optimistic and hope that the Local Authorities will not repeat such planning disasters but in future look at the whole area strategically and that the 'wake-up' call although late is going to be acted upon.

The 'D' Ring Road across the Wake Arms roundabout was a threat to the Forest in the 1950's & 60's and I worry now about the A121 Woodriven Hill in the present decade and future demands for its 'improvement' – so we come back to the need for 'north-facing-slip' roads on the M11 at Debden.

However, as I say we should be optimistic, but remain vigilant!

Several of our officers and members, with representatives of other organisations, have been involved

in giving evidence to the Consultants and have taken part in 'focus groups' and workshops. (*reported elsewhere in this Newsletter*) I suppose at the moment we can only say 'watch this space'!

Within the Forest itself, the 1998 Management Plan, due for its five year review next year, continues to be put into operation; steadily progressing each year as far as the policies of repollarding, creating new pollards and restoring old grassland clearings are concerned. But rather more noticeable this year will be the effect of the programme for re-introducing cattle grazing to the Forest. You will have read in newspapers and newsletters that this policy has now begun and some 12 Longhorn cattle are grazing in the Chingford woods as far as High Beach. You also know that it is considered necessary to place a fence – called a barrier – along the west side of the Epping New Road between Rangers Road and the Robin Hood roundabout.

This issue has been discussed at length on our Committee, with varying views being expressed. Following the discussion it was agreed that the Chairman and Secretary should together write to the Superintendent expressing an agreed consensus of the Committee's views. Very briefly we said that we welcome the return of cattle to the Forest, but that we do not like fencing and do not wish to see an extension of fencing throughout the Forest. We also said we feel we can support the limited use of repollarding and the creation of new pollards as a management tool, but we do not support a policy of returning Epping Forest to a 'widespread wood-pasture' forest. We said we believe that Epping Forest, as an amenity forest – for the 'recreation and enjoyment of the people' – (not inconsistent with its SSSI status) should have many diverse habitats.

The Superintendent's reply contains some reassurances. We hope in the next Newsletter (this one) to provide more detail and to encourage a wide expression of views. Comments to Peggy please.

Another major specific issue during the year has been the Public Inquiry into NGAR – you may wonder what NGAR stands for (but not if you have been faithfully reading your Newsletters). It is Northern Gateway Access Route. To summarise bluntly, this is a proposal which endeavours to solve traffic problems created in Enfield at the expense of Epping Forest and E.F. District. The increasing expansion of industry in the Lea Valley and the need of roads to accommodate the traffic created is largely what is behind the proposals. You will know the details from our Newsletter, but in short the proposals will push much more traffic to Junction 26 of the M25 which when under pressure of congestion will mean the traffic, as an alternative, will use Woodriven Hill to the Wake Arms roundabout, Claypit Hill through High Beach and Wood Green Lane and Crown Hill through Upshire. Thus instead of relieving the Forest of traffic pressures – an objective of the Conservators and Epping Forest District Council – this will enormously increase them. Harry Bitten did most of the work and represented us by giving evidence at the Public Inquiry.

Another threat to the area from development and subsequent traffic is reported to us through Harry's presence on the traffic committee of CPRE (Council for the Protection of Rural Essex). We learn that there are pressures, development of Stansted Airport being one, to turn the M11 corridor (to use the planning jargon) from a 'corridor of communication' into a 'corridor of development'. I do not need to spell out what this could mean all the way from Wanstead to Cambridge - plus a possible 'new town'!

These are just the big problems. There are little ones as

well that have required our attention. One I am pleased to say, where modern technology helped us, was the intention to create a car park along the west side of the Epping New Road just beyond Ambresbury Banks. We had expressed opposition to the original proposal in 1998. This we thought had been dropped, until we discovered the entrance had been marked on the roadside pavement. It was the Friday before the Epping Forest Committee met on the Monday! Fortunately an email to the Chairman allowed us to urge the Committee to have second thoughts. A proposed alternative car park is now likely to be along Crown Hill.

There are various other issues that have been reported to you in the Newsletters, such as the Horse Riding Bye-laws, the Coopersale (Millennium Wood) field, the future of the Hawkwood Lodge site and many other planning matters.

In my Report this year then, I have emphasised just a few of the major issues with which we have been involved. But most of the 'usual' work has still gone on throughout the year; such as the Newsletter and its distribution, the Centenary Walk and the other regular Walks, the Forest Supper, the production of Christmas cards and regular representation on various committees that has kept us informed, informed about large issues and small matters. Thanks must go to all those involved in this regular work that keeps us functioning effectively.

I mentioned earlier our use of 'modern technology'. There is a way you can take advantage of this if you wish to receive your Newsletter in glorious technicolour and also a week or two early – by giving us an email address – it takes just a couple of minutes or so to download. E-mail your request to Seymour Moss on:

seymour@moss.freeseve.co.uk

Last year I sadly had to report the death of Bill Humphrey – during this year we have lost two more long serving Committee members. A member of the Committee since the very early days, Clifford Pyne died in the autumn and although he had been unable to attend meetings for some time his presence has been missed in more than one way. More recently Eric Cropper died, he was also a committee member for many years. Eric had regularly attended meetings of The Epping Forest Committee on our behalf and often, being the only one present, formed 'the public' as he would joke. He had also been an active rambler and a keen bee-keeper and so like Clifford he was also widely known and missed locally.

I am pleased to report a considerable increase in our membership – thanks to our top recruiter Robert Levene. We are approaching the 1400 mark for actual membership addresses, but of course when families are considered this must mean 1800 or more individual persons.

Finally on your behalf, I must thank Peggy and the rest of the Committee and many other helpers for another successful year. However there is one rather special thank-you that must be made this year. You will remember that last year I appealed for help to find a Minuting Secretary – someone was found – Robin Gaine – who has taken over most efficiently. Robin has had a difficult task to follow the efficiency of our previous Minuting Secretary, Joy Smith. Joy had been taking Committee Minutes for – it must be some twenty years – and that was not an easy matter in itself to sort out and de-cypher! But for most of that time she also typed the Newsletters. We are extremely grateful for Joy's years of quiet and loyal service to the Committee. In recognition we presented her with a copy of the book 'Epping Forest – Then & Now'. Thank you Joy.

There is one further special thank-you I would like to make this year and that is to Lord Murray. Perhaps our membership does not fully appreciate that our President is an active President. He is active on our behalf – on the Forest's behalf – in the Houses of Parliament and when he is not there, he and Heather may very well be delivering Newsletters to some of our member's letterboxes. I would like this year to say a special thank-you to him. You will know from reports in the Newsletter that we have other support in Parliament. We must also thank our member Harry Cohen MP for his efforts during the year (reported in the newsletter) on behalf of the Forest.

You will hear from the Treasurer shortly of our comfortable financial position. I would merely steal a little of his thunder by reminding you that it is the income from our invested money that enables us to keep running on such a low subscription rate and consequently increase our membership. I frequently say when making these annual reports that a large membership is most important to us; the power of our elbow increases as our membership increases.

That concludes my Report.

Ken Hoy

The Chairman later thanked the Treasurer, Tony Sheppard, after his report, for his hard work throughout the year and the Chairman finally thanked Peter Gotham, the Financial Examiner.

ADVANCE NOTICE:

Available soon, *Getting to Know Epping Forest* by Ken Hoy (published in aid of The Friends)

NOTICE BOARD

SUPPORT THE FRIENDS by purchasing goods for sale on our stall at summer fetes - Fleece jackets, T-shirts, caps, mugs, pens and greetings cards or contact Seymour Moss on 020 8529 0620.

NOTE: The new Internet address for the Friends web site is:

www.friendsofeppingforest.org.uk

or

<http://members.aol.com/friendsef/foef.htm>

REMEMBER: Members wishing to receive the Newsletter by e-mail should contact Seymour Moss at seymour@moss40.freeseve.co.uk