

The Friends of Epping Forest Newsletter



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

Summer 2003

Dear Friend,

LONDON'S GREEN ARC

As you know, two years ago the City Corporation consolidated a number of Departments managing various open spaces into one Open Spaces Department, headed by Mrs Jennifer Adams.

That department has now issued its first annual report in the form of an attractive 'glossy' magazine. Among the items that catch the eye is one headed, London's Green Arc! There was reference to this concept in the Superintendent's recent annual lecture at Hawkey Hall and it also received a mention in the papers at an Epping Forest and Open Spaces committee meeting.

The item refers to significant progress having been made in joint working with the Forestry Commission, Thames Chase Community Forest, Woodland Trust and the Countryside Agency to protect Epping Forest and its surrounding Green Belt landscape.

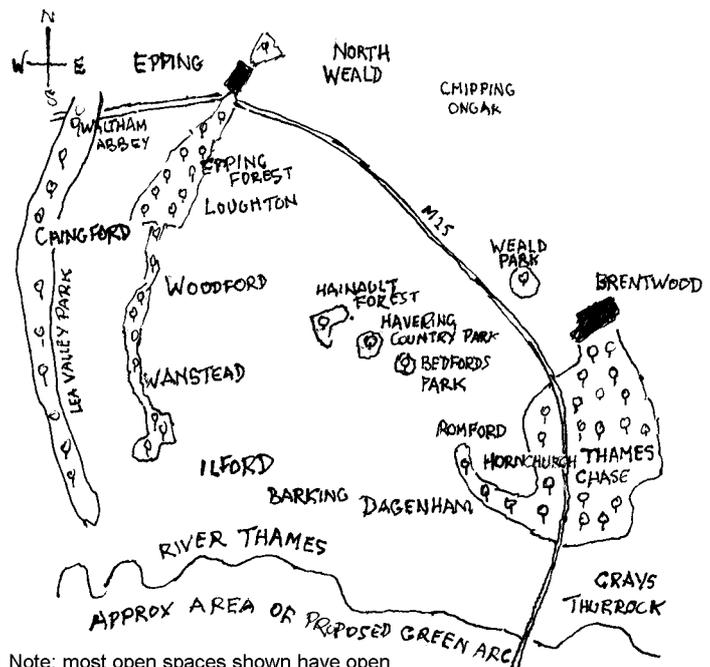
Officers from these bodies have examined ways in which the organisations can co-ordinate their action in regard to Green Belt issues affecting them. They have examined long-term plans for innovative management of the Green Belt to allow better access for the public and to ensure strong effective corridors between the Forest and open spaces concerned.

The group's thoughts encapsulate a vision that seeks to link and expand the open spaces of north and east London, through the creation of a mosaic of woodlands and other habitats promoting access into expansive landscapes populated with people alongside free-ranging grazing animals. The vision imagines a landscape where the public could wander freely over thousands of hectares of open space close to their doorsteps. An environment could be created where plant and animal species would have a haven of space and security where they could expand their range and secure their future.

The creation of such a landscape would transform the Green Belt from an essentially negative planning device to one that positively helps to deliver a remarkable network of green and accessible spaces around and into the City.

Who could possibly disagree with such a notion? After all, south of London has the North Downs with a string of commons and National Trust Open Spaces and the west has the Chilterns with something similar by way of access land, why shouldn't the north and east also benefit.

But how is it to be brought about? The Forestry Commission has been reasonably active in land acquisition



Note: most open spaces shown have open public access. Thames Chase and Lea Valley Park have public access to some parts only.

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Please send all letters to the Secretary and Editor:
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Mrs P Bitten, 9 Frederica Road, Chingford, E4 7AL
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in Thames Chase but this is a defined area and will soak up their available funds! The Woodland Trust has taken over running of Hainault Forest but this is a managerial exercise and hasn't added to its acreage.

The Lee Valley Park is a designated area and the Park's land acquisition projects proceed very slowly and cannot contribute much to the Green Arc vision.

So! Has the City Corporation suddenly discovered stacks of money with which to purchase lots more buffer land? I wish it were so, but I doubt it.

The Green Arc vision refers to 'innovative management of the Green Belt' and 'transforming the Green Belt from an essentially negative planning device'. I am not sure what any of the bodies concerned in this visionary exercise have to do with the management of the Green Belt except in relation to their own land or in objecting to a proposed development.

The general extent of the Green Belt was set out in 1955 by Central Government and then later extended, boundaries are closely defined in local development plans in conformity with County Structure Plans and then approved by Central Government. I am

not sure where the visionaries fit into this! In my view Green Belts are not a negative planning device. They aim to protect and conserve a belt of open countryside around major conurbations within which only limited in-filling and rounding-off of existing settlements are permitted - new building allowed only in respect of agriculture and forestry. The open countryside concerned is used mainly for agriculture.

The planning policy is only negative in the sense that it aims to prevent destruction of the Green Belt countryside by stopping the building of houses etc. There may be a shortage of houses but there is no shortage of volume house-builders, professional bodies, academics and people who live in countryside locations threatened with development, who argue that parts of the Green Belt are not attractive in landscape terms or are neglected. Therefore, these areas they say, should be released from Green Belt duty and built over.

The London Green Belt Council to which the Friends are affiliated has always argued that quality of landscape should not be a determining factor in defining Green Belts, otherwise landowners would degrade their holdings and then seek planning

permission. However, that is not to say that greening of the Green Belt should not be welcomed.

The Chancellor has just made some mention of relaxing the planning system adding to the Government's noises about building hundreds of thousands of houses in the south-east.

I wonder if the authors of the vision have the idea that house-building intrusions into the Green Belt could be accepted provided some land could be released to further the purposes of the Green Arc. It is doubtful whether this would work because whatever the planning permission someone has to put up the money to buy the land, and house-builders are not notably generous people!

But even if it did work and we got thousands of hectares of accessible land, the end result would be the demise of the Green Belt as a countryside protection mechanism that is well understood and has worked well for fifty years. That would really be a negative planning device.

We are hopeful that the Superintendent will respond to this Editorial in the next issue of the Newsletter.

Harry Bitten

THE NATURAL ASPECT *by Ken Hoy*

This year exceptional weather records were made again - the warmest January and February etc. driest March and April and so on; but plenty of rain in May. Many people are recording earlier appearances of flowers, insects, such as bees and butterflies, and some birds. A friend heard a Cuckoo near North Weald on 15th April - quite early. Records of the arrival of summer birds are usually earlier down in the Lea Valley where there are plenty of insects near the water and perhaps a slightly warmer micro-climate.

But the Swallows were on time everywhere, if not early, in the first part of April and the Swifts, most regular of all migrants arrived in the first week of May. They were over my house on the evening of 5th May. They always leave regularly too - during the first week of August.

I thought the early woodland spring flowers were exceptionally spectacular this year, primroses, cowslips, bluebells and in a wood near my home a carpet of Wood Anemones.

These are all the obvious and usual things that one notices - like the first big queen Bumble Bee out of hibernation early in March hovering around looking for a good nest site.

Whenever I go into the Forest these days I find I am thinking about the decreasing numbers of birds in the woodland. Then I wonder, is something happening to the myriad of small insect



Anemones in Garnett Wood and coppice

species that often have particular life cycles that we may know little about? All are dependent upon or need to fit into the pattern followed by other species.

An example of the interdependent 'web of life' - but an obvious one that I look for - is the defoliating caterpillars dangling on silk threads in the woodland. They are a most important food source for many birds. I remember, several decades ago, seeing House Sparrows and Starlings (when there were more of them!) on regular fly-lines back and forth across Chingford Plain to the Bury Wood, collecting beakfuls of caterpillars to feed their young in nests back in houses in Chingford.

The caterpillar numbers will vary considerably with the weather but a complete failure of the caterpillar population can, if then accompanied by cold weather, be disastrous for such birds as the tits that only have one brood per year.

However, this year as I write (end of May), the Oaks have been stripped bare of leaves by the caterpillars. The southern and central parts of the Forest have been very badly affected. In the north of the Forest the effect on the trees has not been so noticeable. Presumably this is due to micro-climatic differences affecting either the laying of eggs by the moths in the previous year, or their survival through the winter, or, this spring the synchronisation of the emergence of the caterpillars from the eggs with the opening of the leaf buds. The moth larvae (caterpillars) usually hatch just before the leaf buds burst fully open, so if the leaf-opening is delayed by cold weather the numbers of caterpillars could be affected.

Thus the fluctuating balances (not quite a contradiction) of different factors each year - and the previous year - can have a serious effect on the whole web of woodland life. To the extent that a bad year of caterpillar defoliation will eventually show up as a thinner tree ring because the growth of the tree has been retarded that year.

The caterpillars are mostly the larvae of three small moths, the Oak Tortrix (or Oak Leaf-roller), the Winter Moth and the Mottled Umber Moth. The Tortrix is the smallest and principal

offender. If I dare predict, this year should see clouds of the small powdery green moths fly out when you knock the branch of an Oak in late June or early July. These will be Oak Tortrix moths that were the caterpillars in April and May - now, as you read, about to lay eggs for next year!

The Oaks that were attacked in April and early May will produce a further growth of shoots in June and July, called 'lammas growth'. This growth has a reddish or coppery colouring that protects the tender shoots from the

change from spring to autumn ploughing and sowing. Meaning of course there is a loss of weed rich stubbles during the winter.

But what of the woodland birds? I have compared three walks in the Forest this year with diary notes of three walks in the same places in the 1940's and 1960's Not a great statistical sample! But the differences are so great in both numbers and species that I am satisfied there is a marked decline in woodland birds too - at least in Epping Forest. There seem to be fewer resident



Young Blue Tits - they have just left the nest and were largely reared on caterpillars

stronger summer sunlight.

Usually these variations cause no serious lasting effect on the trees as the differing years eventually balance out.

However one wonders, as many of the major bird predators upon the caterpillars seem to be reduced in numbers, whether the effects of the caterpillar plagues could become more serious?

The 'good news' is - I have noticed on most trees in the Forest the growth of shoots this year is remarkably vigorous, - the warm and then wet spring? - this is especially the case with the Beech trees.

Let us hope the many complicating factors **do** balance each other and the Oak trees are not too stressed.

Returning to the birds, the decline of 'farmland birds' such as Skylarks, Yellowhammers, Lapwings etc. is now widely recognised. There seems to be little doubt that this is caused by changes in agricultural practices in recent decades. For example the

birds like the Nuthatch, Tree Creeper, Coal Tit, Marsh Tit, Willow Tit, Song Thrush, - and even the robins and blackbirds seem fewer than they once were in the depths of the woods. What of the summer visitors? The Redstarts and Wood Warblers have gone, one hears the Cuckoo only occasionally, there are fewer Spotted Flycatchers and Tree Pipits... and certainly reduced numbers of warblers such as Willow Warblers, Chiff Chaffs, Lesser Whitethroats, Blackcaps and Garden Warblers. Scientific bodies (RSPB & BTO) are conducting several surveys that will perhaps confirm or disprove these subjective impressions and may even eventually provide an explanation. The 'silent spring' prediction seems to become more likely.

What a depressing note to end with! However, I found the spring and early summer were just as beautiful as ever this year... they just went quicker - once again!

Ken Hoy

A MYSTERY SOLVED!

As many friends will know I have spent the last 5 years building and running The Epping Golf Course near Epping Tube Station. This has involved driving that very pretty road through Epping Green every day of the week sometimes more than once. Readers may also know there is a large (40 strong) herd of fallow deer that roams between Copped Hall and the M11 (Harlow) roundabout. I am often lucky to be able to stop for a few moments and observe them sitting or grazing in a group near Cobbins Brook (Epping Upland). The mature stags (about 8) often "parked" on the opposite side of the road to the "Women and children" one of which is completely black. Waynetta would approve!

Obviously this is a farming area and one often encounters tractors and towed implements or at least the mud trail on the road showing the progress from one field to another. I have always blamed these muddy wheeled movements for the occasional isolated piles of mud that appear on the crest of the road, often in two separate piles a few metres apart. In my grumpy way I had imagined an overloaded farm trailer piled too high with earth that shed two "shifts" of its excessive load as the trailer bounced up and down after hitting a lump in the road. (I have done it myself many times carrying materials in a similar fashion on the golf course). I had however mused on the fact that the road is very smooth with no apparent bumps to cause such a disturbance - a fumbled tractor gear change perhaps?

One twilight journey home I was delighted to see the herd of deer crossing in front of me. I stopped at a safe distance put on hazard lights and turned off my headlights so, as Ken Hoy would say, my night vision would work properly and take in the whole scene.

As the parade passed before me the different personalities emerged: some nervous and sensitive others bold and flamboyant, clumps of friends staying close together, the inevitable worried one holding back till the last moment then darting across. Despite the differing styles of crossing they all crossed at the same spot and as their cloven hooves hit the hard road deposited the clay they held between the toes. Next morning I was probably one of the first cars to pass that way. The trail was still there but a few yards on another trail where they had crossed back. Later in the morning I passed that way again and the two trails had been reduced by passing car tyres into two separated piles in the middle of the

road. Since then I have managed to spot such twin crossing points and investigate the tracks on either side. As you would expect there is a lot of milling around one side as the team hangs around waiting for the right moment to cross and some deep tracks well into the field on the other as they rush off elated at their safe crossing of the dangerous road. Incidentally I did hear of a vet locally that was called to put an injured deer out of pain with a lethal injection. Before he could return to collect the carcass in a more suitable vehicle, someone had already taken the deer as dog food; with fatal results for the dogs. Fact or fiction I don't know but a cautionary tale.

If you get a chance take a pair of binoculars and drive that road, more often than not you will be able to see the herd at close quarters. They are quite undisturbed by observers, and if you feel inclined, travel on a bit further and have a cup of coffee at our new clubhouse and see how the 14,000 trees and bulbs have come on that so many of you (Particularly Frank Holzman and friends) helped to plant 5 years ago.

Neil Sjoberg

Oddly enough while walking in St Thomas's Quarters within a hundred yards of the Epping New Road a couple of months ago I disturbed a large herd of deer which included a jet black doe. I wonder if its the same herd.

Harry Bitten

HORSERIDING REGULATIONS RECEIVE RANGERS' ASSENT

In 1990 the City Corporation's (Various Powers) Act was approved by Parliament. This gave the Conservators power to control and license horse riding in the Forest.

The conversion of these powers into a set of Byelaws has been a long and difficult struggle for the Conservators. Draft Byelaws require to be published for public approval or otherwise. Horse riders in considerable number objected to the draft Byelaws, and although the Friends and several other organisations with a membership of many thousands supported the Byelaws, these were referred back to the Conservators for further consideration.

The resultant amended Byelaws were published again and gave rise to a further round of objections and support. In due course, Defra Minister Alun Michael referred the Byelaws –

19TH

CENTENARY WALK

I hope that many members will participate in this year's Centenary Walk on Sunday 21st September. The start will, as usual, be at 09.00 hours sharp, at the junction of Capel Road and Forest Drive, near Manor Park Station.

Thereafter approximate timing will be:

Green Man Roundabout,
Leytonstone 10.00 hours

County Hotel, Woodford Green
11.00 hours

Queen Elizabeth Hunting Lodge
Chingford, 12 noon

Lunch will be at the Owl PH,
Lippetts Hill 13.30 – 14.15 hours

After lunch, the walk will continue via High Beach, the Verderer's Ride and the Forest buffer lands to arrive at Bell Common, Epping at around 17.30 hours.

The walk is about 14 – 16 miles long but is easy pace and there are frequent stops for short explanatory talks about Forest management, history etc.

The walk can be joined and left anywhere along the way. Any queries, ring Harry Bitten on 020 8529 8594.

as required by Section 37 (1) of the Epping Forest Act 1878 – to the Ranger of the Forest, HRH The Duke of Gloucester, with his recommendation that they be approved.

The Ranger duly approved the Byelaws on 16th May. In sending the Friends copies of the relevant correspondence on 17th May, Defra has pointed out that now that the Byelaws are in force only the City Corporation can amend or repeal them. The Government doesn't have the power to do this.

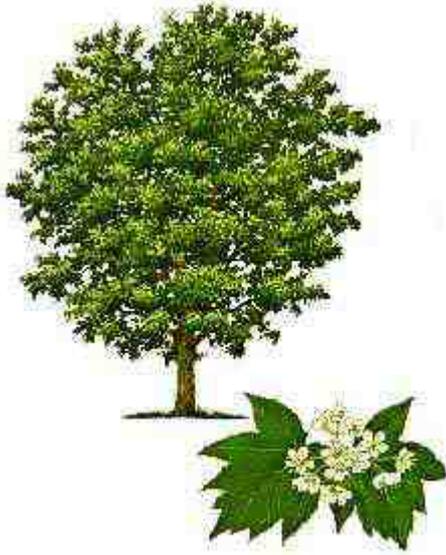
At its June meeting the Epping Forest and Open Spaces committee indicated that the regulations will be brought into operation in October 2003.

We would like to thank both our President, Lord Murray and Harry Cohen MP for the continuing action they took in relation to their parliamentary contacts to help accelerate passage of the draft Byelaws through the system. Members will appreciate that acceleration is a relative term in connection with this exercise!

Peggy Bitten

WILD SERVICE TREES (SORBUS TORMINALIS)

Derek Cope



One of Britain's rarest, least known of our native trees and a sign of ancient woodland; they are to be found in many parts of the Forest. The leaves are similar to the maple in shape and autumn colouring. In May it bears white blossom and in autumn brown edible berries. The bark on the trunk is dark and cracked and can be confused with field maple or hawthorn, whereas higher up on the branches the bark is smooth with pores.

They are long-lived, spreading mainly by suckers, but recently odd seedlings have started to appear. The suckers are often prolific but few ever reach maturity as in the case of the standard in Coronation Plantation at the rear of the Warren which was recorded as being surrounded by suckers in 1892 and looks much the same today.

The most northerly trees found so far are in Birch Wood in the Coppice Wood Bank near Debden House Camp Site and the most southerly a seedling in Walthamstow Forest. Many fine trees are also to be found in Lords Bushes and in Knighton Wood. There are 37 standards and 16 pollards in the main part of the Forest and 27 standards and one possible pollard in Lords Bushes and Knighton Wood (over 50 centimetres girth).

In Blind Lane, near Lippetts Hill, on the boundary bank there are suckers growing from a substantial sucker root which must be quite old without any evidence left of the original tree.

Ernest Lloyd in his excellent survey of 1975 estimated the age of many pollards to be 200 years old and they themselves have originated from suckers, so it is possible that Wild Service Trees have existed in the Forest for a considerable time. It is also thought that some trees may have been planted long ago to act as boundary markers due to their longevity.

The gritty berries, once part of the Neolithic diet, have also been sold in markets in times gone by and eaten as sweets by children after the bunches of berries were brought inside and left to ripen. They have been used as a cure for colic and dysentery and alcoholic drinks have been made from them. In parts of Kent and Sussex the fruit was known as chequers and trees are often found near Chequers Pubs; but there seems some confusion whether the fruit was named after the pubs or the other way round.

The poet John Clare, who sent time in an asylum near Fairmead, spent many happy hours in the Forest and

in 1830 wrote a poem entitled the The Surry Tree (a Northamptonshire name for the Wild Service)

*Tree of tawny berry rich though wild
When mellowed to a pulp yet little known
Though shepherds by its dainty taste beguiled
Swarm with clasped leg the smooth trunk
timber grown
And pulls the very topmost branches down
Tis beautiful when all the woods tan brown
To see thee thronged with berries ripe and fine
For daintier palates fitting then the clown
Where hermits of a day may rove and dine*

Luxuriantly amid thy crimson leaves
As seedlings have now started to appear alongside Forest rides, let us hope in clearance operations they will not be removed as has happened recently in a couple of locations.

Over recent years I have attempted to bring up to date Lloyd's records with the use of a GPS but there is always the possibility that some may have been missed. So, good hunting!

Anyone interested in a Wild Service Tree walk is welcome to join me at the Earls Path on Saturday, 18th October at 10.30am



Wild Service Tree Leaves

BIRD FEEDING STATION

Recently our committee discussed this possibility, feeling that since feeding garden birds seems to have had a good effect on bird populations and also gives the provider a warm rosy glow, it might be a good idea to extend the practice to the Forest.

Accordingly, we wrote to the Superintendent offering to provide items from the RSPB catalogue including a 'conqueror' seed feeder, nyjer feeder for goldfinches and a peanut feeder.

The station we suggested should be placed in the garden of the Information Centre at High Beach in a position visible from the side window. We would of course provide a continuing supply of seeds.

The Superintendent has welcomed this initiative and we will as he requests be contacting Patricia Moxey at the Centre in order to implement the proposal.

Harry Bitten

'FORESTFOCUS'

The Epping Forest Conservators publish a colourful newsletter under this title three times a year. You may obtain a copy, free, from the Epping Forest Information Centre, High Beach or by post by applying to The Warren, Loughton - the Forest Offices.

The newsletter contains a wide range of current information about what is happening in the Forest. The most recent issue explains the purpose of the Liaison Group that the Conservators have formed in partnership with Waltham Forest, Redbridge and Epping Forest District Councils, The Countryside Agency and English Nature. (see *AGM Report*)

It also gives details of the celebration of 125th Anniversary of the passing of the Epping Forest Act in 1878 (see *Dates for Your Diary*) Notable among these is an exhibition of paintings of Epping Forest at the Epping Forest District Museum in Waltham Abbey - admission free between June 21st and August 26th.

There is also going to be an Exhibition of 100 Photographs of the Forest by David Woodfall of 'Woodfall Wildlife Images'. These are selected from a special year long photographic project commissioned by the Conservators. You may have seen David, with his cameras, working in the Forest during the past year or you may have seen his latest book, '*Flowers at My Feet*'. If you are looking for a special present this book will make a beautiful choice. The Photographic exhibition will

be at Guildhall in the City of London in October. It may also be re-mounted locally at a later date.

A report of the Annual Deer Count undertaken in February by the Forest Staff on the Buffer Land, showed a count of 257 Fallow Deer, (21 bucks and 236 does and juveniles). The count gives some indication of the numbers of Fallow Deer in this NW area beyond the Forest, although the numbers in the Forest itself - perhaps no more than a score or so - I believe are not included. The herd averaging 100 plus confined in the Deer Sanctuary at Theydon Bois are also excluded. The count also recorded, 13 Muntjac Deer, and 37 Brown Hares.

The current Newsletter also reports on air pollution in the Forest. Apparently surveys have shown that our Forest is worse than the New Forest and Burnham Beeches. This has always been assumed to be so as we are NE of London whilst the prevailing wind is SW. It seems that the Beech trees and the heather are suffering particularly. Before the 1959 Clean Air Act, pollution was far worse, as indicated by a decline of the Forest's lichen population (a good indicator of pollution). There was an improvement after 1959 indicated by the return of a number of lichen species, but apparently the present situation shows a deterioration again. Monitoring is to continue.

Information is provided about the English Longhorn cattle grazing on the Forest. As we have reported elsewhere, this year the number is an increase from 12 last year to some 30-40 this year. This herd is grazing mostly on

Chingford Plain and the Fairmead Bottom area. Small numbers are grazing other particular areas for a few weeks where they are confined temporarily within electric fencing. Later in the summer, after hay crops have been taken, some of the meadows around the forest - Yate's Meadow, Sheppard's meadow, Birch Hall meadows and Fernhills will be grazed to improve the wild flower populations.

There is also a report of the measures taken by the Conservators to assist 'farmland' bird populations in the Buffer lands and hence the adjoining Forest. The Buffer lands consist of the large area of the Copped Hall Estate that was purchased by the City of London, and the Woodridden, Warlies and Monkams estates that were 'inherited' from the old Greater London Council.

These measures include increased 'set-aside' margins around the arable fields and the seeding of other areas and field margins with special seed mixtures to attract birds. Large flocks have been seen feeding in these places last autumn and winter. The Buffer lands have public footpaths and permissive footpaths, but dogs should be kept on a lead to avoid disturbing the wildlife.

A reminder: Any incidents, actions or behaviour in breach of the Forest Byelaws should be reported to the Forest Office: telephone 020 8532 1010. Calls outside office hours are still passed through to a duty Forest Keeper. For emergencies and criminal activities call immediately 999.

Ken Hoy

MILLENNIUM WOOD

As members will recall, with the permission of the Conservators, the Friends, in 1999, embarked on a project to plant a wood to celebrate the millennium on Corporation buffer land at Coopersale.

Two local schools, Coopersale and Theydon Garnon Primary and Oakhill Primary Woodford, became interested in the project and pupils from both schools have visited the site annually and participated in the planting of acorns and hornbeam and hawthorn seeds.

The project received a setback in 2001 when a local tenant farmer took a silage crop off the field and rather put us back to square one. But, in fact, there are plenty of little treelets coming up, especially on the sown areas.

The jays and squirrels have made their own unauthorised contribution!

In order to press home the project we are proposing to have another acorn planting session on **Sunday, 5 October 2003 from 10.00hrs to midday.**

If you are interested in joining us, park in the car park at the Woodyard (turn right off the road from Epping to North Weald **GR 472031**).

We have left it rather late for this newsletter but we are planning to contact the schools in the hope that they will repeat their previous visits on Friday, 3 October from 10.00hrs to midday. We would like a few members to help with the schools' party, e.g. stop the kids eating acorns or poking each other's eyes out with the planting sticks. Not really - the kids were always well behaved, little treasures on previous visits.

In 2001 I cut my hand whilst demonstrating to them how to plant acorns safely! A little girl came up to me when they were leaving, hoped my poor hand would soon get better and gave me a little bunch of daisies. I was almost unmanned!

Let us know if you are interested in the Friday event and we'll contact you nearer the time.

Harry Bitten

GIPSY SMITH

On a 'Friends' walk around Mill Plain, Sth. Woodford, last year, we paused at Gypsy Smith's memorial and a member told me that her neighbour is Gypsy Smith's grandson and she agreed to ask him to write something for our Newsletter; here it is...

RECOLLECTIONS OF A GYPSY BOY

Sometimes I stand looking out of one of the windows of my house in South Woodford and watching the traffic racing by on the motorway. Years ago, when I was a boy, it was all part of the Essex countryside and we travelled the open road in our horse-drawn vardo (caravan). Nowadays such a Gypsy wagon is a rare sight and in the last twenty years I have seen only two - one in Hampshire and one in Lancashire. But at Easter and Whitsun Gypsy showmen can still be seen travelling with their rides and merry-go-rounds to the fairgrounds around the country so I am able to visit my family on Wanstead Flats.

I was born in the New Forest on a cold winter morning and even though there was snow on the ground I was taken outside and offered up to God according to family custom. I grew up during the war when gorgios (non-gypsies) received ration books and clothing coupons but we had no fixed abode and did not get such luxuries. During the blitz the bombs showed no discrimination and in the air raids I lost friends and neighbours. Our caravans were often damaged or even burnt. So life was hard and I earned a few pennies here and there by carrying bags of coal and potatoes and helping the local milkman when the opportunity arose. This was hard work for a lad not yet in his teens but I was the oldest of the six children in the family and had the responsibility of having to pull my weight. So, I did not go to school and only learned to read and write when I grew up and joined the army.

In the summer time it was good to get away from the town and travel in the countryside, camping at nights in fields under the stars. We found work on farms setting potatoes in the spring and picking fruit later in the year. I loved the times we spent in Kent picking hops and when that was done following Pilgrim Way to Canterbury. It was a beautiful and fascinating place for a gypsy boy.

At the age of fourteen I was left an orphan but I determined to keep our family of six together. This was a big responsibility as my youngest sister was only three and I was now the breadwinner. At this time I took them travelling in Essex where we received support and kindness from some of the farmers who had known my grandfather. There are two well-known monuments in the Epping Forest close to where I now live. One is the statue of Sir Winston Churchill on Woodford Green and the other is the Gypsy Stone

that stands at the place where my grandfather, Rodney Smith, was born, on Mill Plain, Woodford. Gypsy Smith, as he was then known, was a famous evangelist who received the MBE for his Christian service to society. I think of him as the Billy Graham of his day and his life has always been a great inspiration to me. When I walk on Mill Plain, close to his memorial stone, I remember the crowds of people who gathered there to hear him preach. As a lad it was one of my duties to count the people as they assembled, for grandfather would not begin his meeting until a thousand had gathered to listen. I could not count beyond ten so I kept a tally by using a number of sticks and moving them from one pocket to the other. One night after the meeting, I sat with him on the steps of the vardo and committed my life to Christ. I was 14 years old then and I could not escape because he had hold of my ear! I never wanted to be a preacher like my grandfather because he always seemed to be far away in another country when we needed him most. Instead I travelled the world as a circus performer and as a regular soldier in the British Army - but that is another story. It was not until many years later that I returned to my roots and my early commitment and found peace and satisfaction in serving the Lord with all my heart.

Sonny Gibbard

(You might like to know that together with his wife Rosemary, Sonny will be leaving this month to spend the summer – probably until October – in Eastern Europe. There, he will continue his grandfather's tradition by preaching to the Romany people and teaching about Our Lord Jesus.)

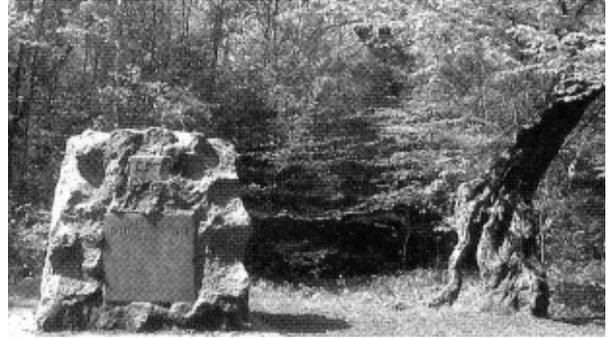
Rita Beaumont, neighbour

Coincidentally, the following article appears in the Summer Newsletter of the Epping Forest Conservation Volunteers.

Gypsy Smith the Evangelist (1860-1947)

We have worked around Gypsy Smith's memorial stone at Mill Plain several times in recent years, and it may be of interest to read a little about the person it commemorates.

Rodney 'Gipsy' Smith was born in a gypsy tent (under the old Hornbeam in my photograph?) He received no education, and his father, Cornelius, and his mother, Mary (Polly) Welch, made a living selling baskets, tin ware



Gypsy Smith's Memorial Stone on Mill Plain

and clothes pegs. His father played his violin in the pubs, and Young Rodney would dance and collect money for the entertainment. Yet he never drank or smoked, which it is said has contributed to his longevity.

Rodney was still a small lad when his mother died from smallpox. A child's song that she had heard sung 20 years earlier about Jesus came back to her comforting her as she passed on. Cornelius had been in and out of jail for various offences, unusually because he couldn't afford to pay his fines. And it was in prison that he had first heard the gospel from a prison chaplain; he tried to explain to his dying wife what he had heard.

After his wife's death, Cornelius and his two brothers were invited to the Latimer Road Mission where they were dramatically converted to Evangelism, and following in his father's footsteps Rodney went on to become, perhaps, the best-loved Evangelist of all times.

He went to America 30 times and preached around the world twice. When he told his life story the crowds that came to hear him overflowed the halls and auditoriums. In the Paris Opera House he had 150 conversions on one occasion alone, out of the cream of Parisian society.

This brief account is derived from the autobiography Gypsy Smith – His Life and Work - By Himself, reproduced in full on the web at

www.revival-library.org/catalogues/world5/smithgipsy

I am grateful to Ralph Boswell for telling me about this.

Derrick Holder

A further task has since been undertaken at this site. The intention being to restore the area to how it may have looked in the second half of the 19th century, during Gypsy Smith's formative years. One can now better appreciate why Cornelias and Mary decided to settle and make home at Mill Plain. It is quite idyllic.

Ralph Boswell

WALK REPORTS

Day Return to High Beach

On Friday 25 April, 61 members and friends took the train - in their imagination - from Bury Road to High Beach. The route was one which might have become a railway through the Forest. From our starting point we could see Chingford Station and could visualise the embankment stretching across the plain to where we stood. Finding the straight line the railway could have taken required some ingenuity, but revealed parts of the Forest seldom seen by walkers. We discovered some Forest surprises - for example the number of glades scattered among seemingly impenetrable woodland. The valley of the Cuckoo Brook would have been crossed by a high embankment; Harry Bitten was pressed into service as a visual measuring-rod to gauge what the height would have been. It would have been five 'Harrys' high (but of course, there can only be *one* Harry!) Getting closer to High Beach, low wooded hills alternated with open Forest plains - which would have been the sites of cuttings and embankments. The terminal station was reached - on time - near Church Road, at the foot of the steep hill leading up to High Beach. (There's a fine beech tree near the buffer stops.) The large number of walkers was very encouraging - if a little embarrassing to the leader who ran out of route maps!

On a personal note, I was delighted to find four of us walking barefoot. Are there others who'd like to try our "back to nature" way?

Walking the route again three days later, I found a pair of glasses (without a case) on a fairly remote part of our



Dulsmead: Coppard clumps

walk. Has any member lost them? Please contact me on 01992-718103 if they're yours.

Edgar Brown

The 'Wild Woods' of Theydon

May 23rd - the forecast was rain, but 25 sturdy people turned up by 10-30 am. Some had not been on any of our walks before. However it was not actually raining when we left the noise of the traffic at Broadstrood car park... and it did not rain at all.

Away from the road where it was quieter, there was discussion about the name 'Broadstrood' or indeed *where* the name applies! Buxton's 1885 map shows it where a small swampy clearing existed until a few decades ago, beside the road just south of the old forest keeper's lodge - Broadstrood Lodge. (We saw the old rhododendrons

growing where the garden once was). Buxton's text however refers to a hollow called Broadstrood at the lower end of Hangboy Slade valley. Someone suggested 'strood' might mean 'a way'. But I found out when I reached home - and looked in Sir Wm Addison's book 'Understanding English Place-names, that he says 'strood' or 'strod', is OE (old English) for 'a marshy place'. Thus it could be either of the locations. I favour the one I have always known it as - the wide marshy area beside the road!

We walked down the ride to the bridge over the stream. We were then in the bottom of the valley known as Hangboy Slade. Fortunately nobody asked why it is so called and I don't know - other than the obvious.

We continued up the ride over the Furze Ground - there was some gorse still growing there. Then we turned north off the ride to the slope called 'The Fox Burrows'. This is the site of the old Badger setts; alas deserted since the late 1960's. Some holes were clearly being used but we decided it was the work of rabbits and a fox.

We crossed Hatgate Plain and found the boundary between the Manors of Theydon Bois & Loughton. This is marked by a small bank and ditch that runs eastwards over the hill and down into the valley below Birch Wood.

Beyond Birch Wood lies the Deer Sanctuary. Looking through the high wire fence we were able to see the majority of the herd, 70-80 Fallow Deer, grazing some way off in the middle of the grassland.



The 'Wild Woods' of Theydon walk

We returned via the Corporation owned meadows of Birch Hall Farm where several of the English Longhorn cattle casually watched us pass by into the Forest. Up on top of the hill we crossed the Ditches Ride, the route of a medieval trackway. But then we descended again into and across Hangboy Slade. Climbing up to the large area of ancient coppice woodland that was apparently pollarded some 200 years ago, we looked at several of the great clusters of pollards that must be many hundreds of years old. We finally crossed Dulsmead Hollow near the Loughton road (A121) and reached the car park at 1-0 pm. I don't think we had walked much more than three miles, but my legs told me that three Forest miles ... up and down the valleys ... always seems to be more. It was an enjoyable morning

Ken Hoy

SIR JAMES HAWKEY

I should imagine that most Friends of Epping Forest have at some time visited the Sir James Hawkey Hall. How many I wonder realise that Sir James played what could be considered a major role in shaping the history of the Country during the Second World War. In 1938 at the height of German rearmament and the debates over the Munich agreement Winston Churchill was one of a minority of M.P.'s opposed to the Governments policy of appeasement. This made them unpopular with a large section of the community. James Hawkey was at this time Chairman of the Epping Conservative Association. In the first volume of his Second World War series Churchill had this to say, "... Each of us was attacked in his constituency by the Conservative Party machine, and many there were, who a year later were our ardent supporters. In my own constituency, the Epping Division, matters came to such a pass that I had to make it clear that if a resolution of censure were carried against me in my local Association, I should immediately resign my seat and fight a by-election. However, my ever faithful and tireless champion and Chairman, Sir James Hawkey, with a strong circle of determined men and women, fought the ground inch by inch and stood by me, and at the decisive meeting of the Association I received in this murky hour a Vote of Confidence of three to two. More recently Roy Jenkins in his biography said this, "Hawkey was a great support for Churchill and a man whom he wisely treated with warm consideration. Hawkey was a locally

educated and self made master baker who held nearly every possible civic office in the constituency and who perfectly respectably therefore was knighted during Churchill's Chancellorship and advanced to a baronetcy at the end of his first premiership in 1945. He and Miss Hawkey who was also locally active were occasional overnight guests at Chartwell,"

Thus next time you are enjoying your Forest Supper, give a thought to James Hawkey and what might have been if the vote had gone the other way.

Ron Budd

SIR JAMES HAWKEY HALL

For quite a few years now we have used this hall for our Forest Supper and for the Annual General Meeting. It fits our requirements very well, it has public transport links and has good car parking. The big hall suits the Supper and the smaller side hall suits the AGM.

In April 2001 we paid Redbridge £132 for the small hall for the AGM; in April 2002 the charge was £170; in 2003 the charge was £175.

In November 2001 the charge for the big hall for the Supper was £308; in 2002 the charge was £259 and in 2003 it will be £300.

So far, so good, but in 2004 Redbridge have put up the charge for hire of the hall to no less than £600 for Monday evenings and £800 for Friday evenings. It will no longer be permitted to hire the small hall only, the full £600 must be paid!

We are proposing to write to Redbridge Council querying these charges which seem designed to render the Hawkey Hall too expensive for the average user, certainly this user for the AGM.

Rumours have been rife for several years that the hall is under threat of closure, which would be a disaster because it is such an attractive venue and a decoration to the borough.

If any member has any influence with Redbridge councillors, how about a bit of gentle, or not so gentle, lobbying.

In the meantime, we have booked Woodford County High School's main hall for the next AGM (Monday, 26 April 2004). Unfortunately it is not big enough for the Forest Supper.

Harry Bitten

COMMONERS' APPEAL – DOCUMENTS FOR SALE

Following the taking over of the Forest by the City Corporation in 1878, a dispute arose when some of the Commoners of Loughton tried to exercise their rights as they saw them, and had to fight the Corporation. As part of the legal process they produced a document headed 'Epping Forest Commoners Appeal 1893'.

Photocopies of this document are available at £1.50 plus postage 50p from: Paul Narraway, 22 Beresford Road, Chingford, E4 6EE. Phone 020 8529 7551. All proceeds to Friends of Epping Forest.

Paul Narraway

FOOTBALL TRAINING ON WANSTEAD FLATS

Towards the end of last year the Conservators issued a local resident's consultation document announcing that they were considering the establishment of training pitches and changing facilities for use between 16.00 hours and 21.30hrs, 7 days a week, in the Aldersbrook Road and Capel Road areas of the Flats. (See Spring 2003 Newsletter)

Football clubs would be required to book pitches in advance and mobile lighting units would be deployed.

There were 250 responses, 190 of which were opposed on grounds of traffic congestion, litter, noise and general disturbance.

These objections were considered by the Wanstead Flats Playing Fields Committee which decided to hold over the proposals for a year while the Conservators try to address the concerns of the local residents. They also decided, in any case, to use only Aldersbrook Road, perhaps on a limited number of evenings a week, and to abandon the proposals in respect of the Capel Road site because of the impact of adverse weather on ground conditions.

Peggy Bitten

DONATIONS RECEIVED

1 April 2002 to 31 March 03

G Green, J Passmore, M Jones, The Anslow sisters, H Mitchell, D Stothard, D Lockwood, M Craigen, J Hayward, S Ellis, J Hicks, D Toovey, M Block, S Good, J Rainbird, V White, P Rolfe.

Apologies for any missing names!

Ed

SPEED REDUCTION THROUGH THE FOREST

The Friends have long been concerned about traffic speeds through the Forest and over the years we have made representations to various bodies on the matter.

Earlier this year Lord Murray, our President, was unlucky enough to be knocked over by a motorcyclist (who failed to stop) whilst crossing A104 at Fairmead. He has well recovered from the cuts and bruises he sustained but we used this unfortunate incident as a 'peg' on which to hang a letter to the Head of Highways in Chelmsford on the subject of traffic speeds.

We pointed out the dangerous nature of the Epping New Road, both the A104 and B1393 sections, and Rangers Road to birds and animals as well as people. We stressed the fact that the existence of these and other busy roads compromised the Forest's recreational potential and its biological continuity. We also mentioned that the construction of the fence (sorry, protective barrier) along the A104 in order to contain grazing animals offended in our view against the spirit of the Epping Forest Act 1878 in respect of its openness and unenclosed nature.

Rather than summarising the reply, we think members might like to see the Head's response in full!

Harry Bitten

Letter from Ciabarro...

EPPING FOREST - TRAFFIC ISSUES

Thank you for your letter dated 24 March 2003.

Firstly would like to inform you that we, as Highway Authority, have a good working relationship with Superintendent of Epping Forest and his staff. We are working closely with them on a number of projects which will resolve some of your concerns.

By way of background, I felt that it would be useful to inform you how our relationship has been built over the past couple of years. In early 2000 we received an invitation from the Corporation of London, who manage the forest, to participate in a meeting to discuss ways in which a strategy could be developed between the Corporation of London, relevant local authorities and countryside organisations (such as the Countryside Agency) to manage, protect and sustain the forest in the future. Particular areas of concern for the Corporation were planning and development in the buffer zone around

the forest and traffic issues within the forest. This group has now met on a number of occasions and it is hoped that through the development of these closer links an agreed vision for the forest, the needs of development, highways and the forest can be met and balanced. Officers from both the Highways and Transportation and the Planning divisions attended the meeting.

This liaison group has been pursuing a number of initiatives, the main being the commissioning of a "quality of life Capital study" by Levett-Therivel (Land Use Consultants). A result of this study has been the development of a vision statement for Epping Forest.

As part of the continuing work we have been investigating three main areas of concern and are preparing safety schemes for inclusion in the capital programme. These are:

- *A speed reduction scheme for Rangers Road.*
- *A speed limit and speed reduction scheme for the entire length of A104 Epping New Road.*
- *A junction improvement at Rangers Road/Epping New Road.*

In addition to this work we are also agreeing with the Superintendent the inclusion of various warning signs as a result of the introduction of cattle into the forest. I have to say that we were concerned about road safety when the cattle were introduced and as a result following various discussions, the fence was erected.

Another item of work is the possibility of building a traffic model for the area so that various scenarios associated with traffic management proposals, which may include closures, can be tested. This work is expensive and may take some time but we hope that the safety schemes outlined above will bring some quick benefits to the forest and the people using it.

Should you feel it would be worthwhile meeting to discuss these issues further, then I would be happy to do so.

*Yours sincerely,
Tony Ciabarro*

Head Highways & Transportation

STANSTED AT THE AGM

At our AGM in April the speaker was Suzanne Walker, Chairman of the CPREssex (now Campaign for the Protection of Rural Essex). Suzanne is heavily involved in the Stop Stansted Expansion campaign and spoke of the threat to rural Essex and Forest posed by the published 'consultation' plans to develop Stansted into an airport bigger than the present Heathrow.

She pointed out the way the failure of the airlines industry to be charged tax on fuel and VAT on spares and maintenance distorts the economics of the industry and enables airlines to charge much lower fares than the true costs. In addition no consideration is given to the disbenefits imposed by the industry on the environment.

Harry Bitten

LEGAL HELP NEEDED

Do we have any members with Legal expertise who would be willing to help us investigate, on a voluntary basis, certain questions we have about the Epping Forest Act 1878 and how it is being applied in practice by the Corporation of London in particular about the current and increasing INCLOSURE (enclosure) of parts of the Forest by the Corporation.

If you can help please contact: me on 020 8989 0884.

Thank you, Robert Levene

GIFT AID

An extra way to make a donation from April 2004.

If you complete a Self Assessment tax return from April 2004 on your Self Assessment form there will be an option to nominate approved charities to receive all or part of any repayment due to you.

The Friends of Epping Forest has received initial approval to be an approved charity for donations of tax refunds. In a future newsletter we will publish a Code number for our charity that you can enter on the form.

All donations made to us via this method are anonymous and paid directly into our bank account and we DO NOT receive any confidential information, however if you wish to tell us we be very pleased to acknowledge your donation.

If you do have to complete a self assessment form why not take the opportunity to make a "tax Free" donation to the Friends.

Any one wanting more information about Gift Aid should contact Robert Levene on 020 8989 0884.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

July 19th 10.30am

125th Anniversary of the Epping Forest Act 1878

Walk and BBQ. Meet in the Fairmed car-park for a gentle walk to Suntrap Field Study Centre.

July 27th, Sunday 10.30am.

Writtle Forest Our 'away-day' walk in the Essex countryside. Meet at the Viper Public House near Mill Green. Take the A12 towards Chelmsford; turn off onto the B1002 into Ingatestone and then left into the narrow road west to Fryerning. At the top of the hill and at the T-junction turn right and keep along the middle of three roads. At the next T-junction turn left, go past the windmill on the left and the Cricketers Public House on the right and continue until you reach the Viper (PH) on the left. The car park is in the woods opposite.

Leader: Bill Dexter, GR 642 021
(O.S. Map 161 – London NE)

August 17th, Sunday, 2pm.

A buffer-land walk from Upshire with the opportunity to take afternoon-tea afterwards at Upshire Church. Meet in Upshire village hall car park. Travelling north on the B1393 (Epping New Road) take the first turning on the left (Crown Hill) after the Wake Arms Roundabout and follow it (under the motorway) for one-and-a-quarter miles. The village hall car park is opposite the church.

Leader: Sue McKinley, GR 415 011

September 7th Sunday, 12 noon – 4pm. FofEf stall at the Forest Festival, Queen Elizabeth Hunting Lodge. 125th Anniversary event.

September 13th Saturday, FofEf stall at Upshire Village Fete.

September 21st Sunday, 9am – 5.30pm. **Centenary Walk** from Manor Park to Epping (see p.4).

Leader: Harry Bitten, GR 419 860

October 17th, Friday, 10.30am.

A walk around the Wake Valley Pond area. Meet in the High Beach car park by Carl's tea hut. (By the pillow mounds with view of Waltham Abbey)

Leader: Derek Meakin, GR 412 983

October 18th, Saturday, 10.30am.

Looking for Wild Service Trees. Meet in the Earls Park car park, which is on the road running between the Robin Hood Roundabout and Loughton.

Leader Derek Cope, GR 426967



**FoEF - Suntrap
BBQ July 19th**



Although there were attempts to enclose Epping Forest many times during the early and mid-nineteenth century, the crucial battle to save the Forest began in 1865 when the Loughton Commoners defied an attempt to enclose most of the Loughton woods - the 'common waste'. The Corporation of the City of London intervened in 1871 and began a legal struggle against the Lords of all the Manors in the Forest.

The fight was finally won when the Epping Forest Act was passed by Parliament in 1878. In 1882 the Arbitrator settled the boundaries of the Forest and declared the disputed enclosures illegal.

This year is the 125th Anniversary of the passing of the Epping Forest Act 1878 and The Friends of Epping Forest are holding a walk and picnic BBQ in celebration

**Starting at Fairmead Bottom Car Park 10-30 am. we will explore the surrounding woods and glades. (leader Ken Hoy)
The walk will end at 1-0 pm at The Suntrap Field Study Centre for a BBQ (vegetarian food available)**

After lunch there will be a chance to see the Field Centre, its living creatures and to hear about its work.

All wishing to attend should notify Peggy Bitten (020 8529 8594) by Monday July 14th

Those members needing transport should also mention this to Peggy

There is no set charge but donations will be welcome

November 13th, Thursday, 10.30am.

A walk over Warren Hill and Powell's Forest. Meet in the Nursery Road car park, Loughton. Take the road from the Robin Hood (PH) to Loughton (Earl's Path) and turn right into Smarts Lane, first right again into Nursery Road. Car park is on the right after 200 yards.

Leader: Seymour Moss GR 418 963

November 28th, Advance warning of Forest Supper at Sir James Hawkey Hall, 7.30 for 8.00.

December 13th, Saturday, 10.30am.

A Christmas Walk from High Beach, followed by wine and mince pies. Meet in the main car park at High Beach near Carl's tea hut. (See October walk)

Leader: Harry Bitten, GR 412 983

OTHER DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Epping Forest District Museum, Sun Street, Waltham Abbey

**June 21st - Aug 26th
A Walk in the Woods.**

An exhibition of art inspired by the landscape of Epping Forest at

July 2nd, 10.30 - 4.30

**A Walk in the Woods
Painting Workshop**

Epping Forest Field Centre, High Beach £15.00 (con. £10)
Must be booked in advance
Tel: 01992 716882

continued over...

Waltham Abbey Historical Society
September 27th, Saturday, 2.30pm.

**Monasteries on the Landscape –
The National Context of Waltham
Abbey**

A lecture by Dr. Glyn Coppack,
Principal Inspector for English Heritage
and a leading figure of Monastic
Archaeology. At the Waltham Abbey
Church, admission £3 on the door or
£2 in advance from 26 Monkwood
Avenue, Waltham Abbey, EN9 1LB
(cheques payable to Waltham Abbey
Historical Society).

**Epping Forest Conservation
Volunteers programme.**

Sunday July 20th Almshouse Plain

Sunday July 6th Two Tree Island,
Leigh-on-Sea (Essex Wildlife
Reserve)

Sunday August 3rd Lords Bushes

Sunday August 17th Barn Iloppit

Sunday August 31st Bulrush Pond

Sunday Sept 14th Barn Hoppit

Tuesday Sept 16th AGM

Sunday Sept 21st Little Wake Valley
Pond

For further details of these dates,
contact the Chairman, Peter Lyons on
020 8529 3060.

Epping Forest Information Centre

Thursday 3rd July
Artists in the Forest

A guided walk led by Head Forest
Keeper Nick Eade and Tricia Moxey.
Meet opposite the Foresters Arms,
Baldwins Hill, Loughton at 2.00 pm.
(CR 427 976). Free activity.

Sunday 13th July
Apples and Pears

A guided walk led by Verderer Peter
Adams. Meet beside Buckhurst Hill
Cricket Pitch at 10.30 am.
(CR 410 945). Free activity.

**Saturday 19th July and Sunday
20th July.**

Preparing for a Tudor hunt!

11.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. at Queen
Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge. Meet
some of the servants preparing the
Hunting Lodge for a royal *court* visit.
Free family event with the History Re-
enactment Workshop.

Monday 4th August

The Temple — Wanstead Park
Help us make a massive mural
showing the Temple when it was first
built 11.00 am to 5.00 pm. Free family
event. Children must be
accompanied.



Church Road, High Beach

Where children from Waltham Forest
Schools who attend the Centre are
involved in activities within the
Forest that are closely linked to
work undertaken in school.

The Centre is holding its
Annual Open Day on
Saturday October 11th 2003
between 1-0 pm & 5-0 pm.

Everyone is welcome to see the work
of the Centre in action - so bring your
children or grandchildren to enjoy the
many activities in which they can
take part. Refreshments available.

For further information
Tel. 020 8508 0611

Thursday 7th August

Pies, glorious pies! The Tudors
cooking. Free event at Queen
Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge 1.00 to
4.00 pm. Children must be
accompanied.

Saturday 9th August
Training Day for Young Anglers
Please telephone for details 020 8508
0028.

Sunday 10 August
Along the Long Green.

A guided walk led by Tricia Moxey.
Meet by the Travellers Friend, Epping
Upland at 10.30 am. (CR 435 056).
Free activity.

Thursday 21st August
Off with her head!

Colour in our paper doll of Queen
Anne Boleyn. Free activity at Queen
Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge 1.00 to
4.00 pm. All children must be
accompanied.

Saturday 23rd August

Falconry Day. Free event at Queen
Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge 10.30 am
to 4.00 pm. **NO DOGS PLEASE**

For further information, please
contact: The Epping Forest
Information Centre, High Beach,
Loughton, Essex IG10 4AF

Tel: 020 8508 0028/2266

Sunday 7th September
Forest Festival

Chingford Plain 11.00am. to 4.00pm.
A spectacle of historical and environ-

mental displays. Free family event to
mark the 125 years of the Conserva-
tors management of Epping Forest.

Monday 22nd September
Revealing Timbers!

Discover how the Hunting Lodge was
built and used. 2.00 to 3.30 pm at
Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge.
Cost £3.00. Booking essential, please
telephone 020 8508 0028.

HON TREASURER'S REPORT

I am very pleased to report that the
finances of 'The friends' have remained
in a sound condition during the last
financial year. The management
committee have continued to adopt a
policy of keeping subscriptions very low
in order to encourage as many people
as possible, who appreciate and enjoy
Epping Forest, to join our organisation
and to remain members. However for
many years we have relied to some
extent upon the income that we derive
from our reserves to make a
contribution to our running costs, eg the
production of this newsletter, postage
etc. Unfortunately with the constant
decline in interest rates that we have
seen over recent years, that income
continues to decrease. Therefore if
some of our members, and particularly
life members, are able to make
donations those additional funds do
help us to cover our expenses and keep
subscriptions at a low level. Also if you
are a tax payer we are able to claim the
tax back on both subscriptions and
donations, all you need to do is sign a
simple 'Gift Aid' declaration; that form
can be obtained from our Hon Memb.
Secretary. Copies of our accounts are
available to members upon request.

At the beginning of 2002 we decided
that our major project for the year would
be to underwrite the production costs
of Ken Hoy's book 'Getting to know
Epping Forest' which was published last
Autumn. I am delighted to say that the
book has proved to be an outstanding
success and by March 2003 some 50%
of the original print run had been sold.
Ken has generously insisted that all
profits will come to the Friends and I
thoroughly recommend this informative
and interesting publication — it makes
an excellent present.

Many thanks to all of you for your
support over the past year; please
continue to encourage your friends to
become members.

With very best wishes

Tony Sheppard

CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT - APRIL 28TH 2003

Every year before I write this Annual Report I always read what I reported last year - because usually the same important matters tend still to be relevant. It would be a colossal understatement to say that has happened again this year.

Since the Friends of Epping Forest was first formed in 1968, we have been forced to consider what happens in the areas around but outside the Forest because of the effect that this might have upon the Forest itself.

Some recent Strategic Planning documents... the options, implications and scenarios that they represent, are quite horrendous for the countryside of SW Essex and therefore for Epping Forest. I am sure you will be aware to some extent of these threats from the local press and various official pronouncements. I am of course referring to:

- the proposed development of Stansted Airport, where the worst scenario would be twice the size of Heathrow - with all the infrastructure, housing, industry & roads.
- the so-called future housing requirements for Essex, where figures like 29,000 houses to be built in EFDC have been mentioned,
- the proposed development of the M11 corridor all the way to Cambridge,
- the alleged 'need' for at least one 'new settlement' of 200,000 people and the huge expansion of existing 'settlements' - currently Harlow is 80,000 people and the proposed 'need' for Harlow is at least double.

Most of these documents do not consider the infrastructure requirements of the housing proposals, or the road and traffic implications. Also they seem to ignore the basic planning principles that have been followed for more than half a century. Such as keeping a clear visual distinction between urban and rural landscapes and the separation of communities to prevent development coalescing into near continuous sprawl by maintaining the concept of green belts. These basic planning principles are ignored.

The representations or protests of individual organisations such as ourselves might appear quite futile with regard to such vast strategic planning proposals.

Obviously the efforts of local organisations will be much more effective if they are combined. The means of achieving this is clearly through collective support for such organisations as the Council for the Protection of Rural Essex (CPRE) which has an Epping Forest group and a County organisation. Beside ourselves, there are represented at those two levels other local societies from Theydon, Epping, Waltham Abbey and North Weald. Although we all make our local representations it is through CPRE at county, regional and national levels that more effective impacts can be made.

During the last year we have continued our representation on such larger bodies, the London Green Belt Council, and as I said, the CPRE at local Epping Forest and at County level. (here we must thank Harry for a lot of that work.)

In last year's report I mentioned that Essex County Council and 3 local authorities - Redbridge, Waltham Forest & Epping Forest District Council - together with the Countryside Agency and English Nature had formed with, and on the Epping Forest Conservator's initiative, what they called 'The Liaison Group'.

This Group began by commissioning a report to be made by consultants. The Report has recently been received and is entitled "What matters & Why in Epping Forest". It is based upon and results from interviews with individuals, 'focus' (i.e. discussion) groups and 'workshops' with local people.

(the names of people or organisations participating were provided by the Conservators - including some of our own members).

The problems of traffic through the Forest was the main issue constantly raised by the local folk throughout the Consultant's study. Mentioning such matters as:

- Improvement to the road infrastructure around the Forest to lessen the traffic within it
- Closure of some Forest roads to through traffic
- Greater co-operation between the Highway Authorities & the Conservators.

Of course the Liaison Group itself, providing as it does a forum where local officers are able to co-ordinate their efforts to influence plans and initiatives that potentially affect the Forest, have already been discussing the alleviation of traffic problems... some effects of this are already apparent.

Perhaps we can assume that a recent reply (*letter reproduced on p.10*) we had to a letter we wrote to the County Council expressing our concern about the traffic problems in the Forest, is a result of this co-operation... for the Head of the County Highways & Transportation dept. in his reply wrote in almost glowing terms about the Liaison Group and its effectiveness - and mentioned that the following measures will soon be taken:

- a speed reduction scheme for Rangers Road.
- a speed limit and speed reduction scheme for the entire length of the A104 Epping New Road
- a junction improvement at Rangers Road/Epping New Road

Such measures we believe would be a fine first step in the right direction (*attentive readers of the Newsletter will know we have been asking for such solutions for a long time*).

Returning to the survey. Another attribute which produced 'near unanimity' among the participants was the value of the 'wildness' and remote tranquillity of the Forest. The need to preserve this quality was referred to constantly.

Other points repeatedly mentioned were:

- More keepers 'on foot', this was also a very frequent comment ...
- more buffer lands and greater access to them was a widely supported policy ...
- general support for the reintroduction of cattle grazing and an emphasis on the historic past of the Forest ...
- emphasis on informal recreation and that the provision of any further organised sports should be outside the Forest i.e. not allowing 'inappropriate activities' (*inappropriate in a forest*).
- approval of the present 'low-key' approach to notice boards and signs.

These were all comments that one might expect to be widely made.

You will remember from our past Newsletters that the second 5 year Management Plan for the Forest has just finished its rather short public consultation exercise. This was achieved through the publication of a fine glossy document, in which there is very little with which anyone can disagree. In short it explains in general terms the policies of the first 5 year plan and proposes a continuation of those policies in the second plan. As you know, our Committee has discussed those policies several times and whilst agreeing with most of the Plan we have expressed specific concerns to the Superintendent and the Verderers.

Obviously in the details of such management matters there are almost as many views as there are people prepared to give them. However, we have developed a general consensus about our apprehensions and reservations.

Firstly the Forest is an SSSI and must be conserved, but we do not see that being inconsistent with it being "conserved and protected as an open space for the recreation and enjoyment of the public" - the familiar requirement of the Epping Forest Act 1878. We see no conflict between the two aspects as part of the public's enjoyment of the Forest is precisely because it **is** an SSSI.

That said, our concern is simply the maintenance of a balance in the management policies - by that I mean we do not wish to see the Forest categorised as 'wood-pasture' or 'pasture-woodland' and the woodlands then 'managed' to fit that description by clearances and widespread pollarding for intensive grazing. And, of course I know from your letters that whilst welcoming the return of cattle many of you are also concerned about what the reintroduction of grazing incurs in the form of the fencing and the 'enclosure' of areas of the Forest.

We believe there is a place in an amenity forest for high mature woodland, for thickets and for dense scrub. In other words a diverse and varied forest. So as not to be misunderstood we must keep saying *we are not against grazing or pollarding as such*. The general policies for "the management of habitats", as explained in the Plan, are such that we do not disagree with them. But it would be misleading if I did not say your Committee has these apprehensive reservations about how the policies might be carried out and how intensively.

Now — there are several other matters that I should report to you:

- The horse riding regulations - these are with the Forest Ranger (the Duke of Gloucester) for approval and are likely to become operative later this year - since the organised riders are not opposing the implementation of the licensing scheme any longer
- NGAR - the Northern Gateway Access Route - Those proposals (supported by Enfield), that we believe would have brought much more traffic through the Forest roads were opposed by the EFDC and the Conservators... and by ourselves - Harry gave evidence in opposition on our behalf. The proposals have now been rejected
- Also turned down are the Fairlop lake leisure centre

scheme and the 'Spurs' Football Academy proposals. Both of these schemes we consider would have affected the area's traffic problems and in size would have been inappropriate in the Green Belt.

- The Superintendent has agreed to consider providing greater access, in the form of permissive footpaths through the buffer-lands.
- We have very recently made representation about car parking in the Crown Hill/St Thomas's Quarters area of the Forest - particularly against the closure of the Lodge Road car park.
- We are still concerned about developments in the form of planning applications in the High Beach area - but we believe both the Conservators and the Planning Authority are now also concerned.
- We continue to raise with Planning Authorities the matter of excessive lighting in the vicinity of the Forest.
- We have also been concerned about the future of the old Hawkwood House site in Chingford
- We have heard an ominous rumour that in the distant future the M25 tunnels at Epping and Waltham Cross are going to be 'repaired' and that this may require the closure of that section of the M25! — So, imagine the demands of a long term 'diversion scheme' where the widening of Woodredon Hill will inevitably be a likely proposal in such a situation.
- The Forest Supper and the Centenary Walk were organised successfully again — put the date for this year's walk in your diaries. It is Sept. 21st
- We have offered to provide a Bird Feeding Station at the Forest Information Centre at High Beach
- Lastly, I am sure you know that we have entered the world of publishing... but I will leave that for the Treasurer's Report.

It remains now for me to thank the Officers and Committee on your behalf for all their work behind the scenes ... the Newsletters, their delivery, organisation of the events and walks, the sales items, representation on various other bodies and a host of other matters....

I think that must conclude my Report of the salient points from the last year's activities and what we must prepare ourselves for in the coming year!

Ken Hoy

NOTICES

SUPPORT THE FRIENDS by purchasing goods for sale - Ken's new book, lapel badges, fridge magnets, spy scopes, T-shirts, mugs, pens and greetings cards - contact Seymour Moss on 020 8529 0620.

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

F of EF E-MAIL AND WEB ADDRESSES

Ken Hoy: khoy@care4free.net

Membership Secretary (Seymour Moss):
seymour@moss40.freeserve.co.uk

FofEF web-site: www.friendsofeppingforest.org.uk
or <http://members.aol.com/friendsef/foef.htm>

F of EF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Judy Adams	Loughton	020 8418 0730
Peggy Bitten (Sec.)	Chingford	020 8529 8594
Harry Bitten	Chingford	020 8529 8594
Irene Buchan	Chingford	020 8529 6423
Alan Curran	Buckhurst Hill	020 8504 8720
Bill Dexter	Chingford	020 8529 1427
Robin Gaine	Chingford	020 8529 8890
Jim Gimson	S. Woodford	020 8989 3282
Ken Hoy (Chairman)	High Easter	012 4523 1839
Robert Levene	Snaresbrook	020 8989 0884
Sue McKinley (Dep.-Chair)	Upshire	019 9271 2014
Derek Meakin	Chigwell	020 8500 1571
Judy Miller	Buckhurst Hill	020 8504 8271
Seymour Moss (Memb. Sec.)	Chingford	020 8529 0620
Peter Read	Chingford	020 8524 1659
Tony Sheppard (Treas.)	Woodford Grn	020 8504 8288