

The Friends of Epping Forest Newsletter



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

Summer 2004

Members will have learned from the media of the death, on the 20th May, of our President, Lord Lionel (Len) Murray of Epping Forest, aged 81.

Lionel had a distinguished career largely in the Trades Union movement culminating in his appointment as General Secretary of the TUC, NOT an easy period coinciding as it did with Margaret Thatcher's Premiership!

After Sir William Addison our former President died, Lionel who had recently retired and had become a Life Peer, was asked to accept the role. He indicated that he was prepared to do so but not just as a figurehead, he wanted to be involved and to help.

He lived up to his word and was active in pressing, through his Ministerial contacts, for decisions in relation to the horseriding bye-laws. He also pursued through his being a Trustee of the Carnegie Foundation some of the facts behind the acquisition in 1935 of the Hawkwood Estate.

Lionel enjoyed walking in Epping Forest and was committed to its protection and preservation. He was a regular on the Centenary Walk for many years and wrote yearly to the Management of the County Hotel Woodford



in a friendly way inviting them to continue the practice of supplying walkers with free mid morning drinks. The Management of the hotel has always been very supportive of the Centenary Walk but a nice letter on House of Lords notepaper would not have done any harm!

He and his family took an active part in the planting of seeds and seedlings in our Millennium Wood Project and he and Heather thought nothing of setting to with the washing up after many a FoEF do.

Although he had a serious illness a few years ago he had seemed to make a reasonable recovery. He and Heather helped to 'man' our stall at the Swaines Green Fayre on 1st May and Lionel was seen around and about only a couple of weeks before his final illness. In fact he was walking in the Forest the day before he died.

Lionel was a significant national figure but in our contacts with him he was always friendly, helpful and full of good

humour. He leaves Heather his wife of 59 years, four children and six grandchildren to whom we offer our deepest sympathy. He will be much missed by us all.

Harry Bitten

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Dear Friend,

1. In the Spring Newsletter we set out the proposals for new housing in the Eastern Region emanating from the EERA East of England Regional Assembly (a body set up by the Government but not directly elected) but taking its instructions from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister aka Mr. Prescott. The instructions being that 500,000 new homes should be built in the Region by 2021.
2. At present Epping Forest District Council's share of all this new housing is 18,600 which will require major incursion into the District Green Belt. This is so much at odds with Mr. Prescott's public statements in the national press that "*This Government, as I have made clear on every occasion is committed to preserving and extending the Green Belt in all our regions*" that we wrote to all M.P.'s in Forest constituencies drawing attention to the contradiction.
3. We drew attention to the enormous importance of the Green Belt in protecting the Forest both from a biological standpoint and by way of traffic/human pressure.
4. These letters drew two replies, one via Iain Duncan Smith M.P. for Chingford from the Deputy Prime Minister and one via Mrs. Eleanor Laing M.P. for Epping Forest District from the Minister of State. They, hardly surprisingly, were virtually identical.
5. The letters indicate that the Friends are right to place great importance on the Forest retaining a relatively undisturbed open countryside setting. They stress that the Forest is one of the most protected areas in England being both a Special Area

continued over...

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for Conservation and a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

6. Both letters indicate that they "are pleased to give us the assurance we seek that the Government would not accept development proposals – whether from the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) or developers – that would threaten the conservation value of the Forest".

7. With regard to (6) above, we did not in so many words seek such assurance! We sought an explanation of why Government was saying that they were protecting the Green Belt when proposals were being made that made inroads into it in our area!

8. They go on to say "However the conservation and enhancement of the Forest's setting should not be confused with the identification of suitable locations to meet the Region's development needs that are well away from the Forest and where development would not impact on its conservation".

9. The problem with (8) is that in both major studies (Harlow Option and Stansted Corridor) a southern by-pass was proposed for Harlow and a large expansion of the town westwards and southwards into the Green Belt. This would impact on Epping Long Green (a northern outlier of the Forest). Expansion of both Loughton and Waltham Abbey were proposed and the development of North Weald Airfield, all these areas being in the Green Belt. The later would impact on the Lower Forest while the former are also very close to the Forest itself.

10. Both letters claim that it is the EERA's responsibility to prepare draft regional planning guidance and that the precise number of extra homes that will need to be built in each part of the region, including Epping Forest District, is a matter for regional planning not Central Government. This is a carefully worded statement that obscures the fact that it is central government (ODPM) which has set the 500,000 new homes target leaving the EERA merely the task of allocating the numbers around the various districts!

11. In fact the authors of the Harlow Options Study opted for a middle level of development for the area. But on publication they were taken to task by GO-EAST, the Government's mouthpiece for the East of England, on the grounds that the area should bear a higher level of development than they recommended!

So much for the ODPM's claim at (10) above that it's nothing to do with me guv!

12. The EERA have produced a draft Regional Planning Guidance (RPG 14) for the Region and later on this year there will be a public consultation on the subject. At that stage, hopefully, the Friends will respond as will the CPRE with whom we are in close contact, and many other bodies. Doubtless the massive housing expansion sought by the Government will be challenged, bearing in mind that the proposals come out of Government's report on 'Sustainable Communities'.



GARDENERS' QUESTION TIME

With Old John Prescott

1st Caller: What is the best thing to do with my lawn?

Old John: This is the time of year for getting rid of all that awful grass and putting in some housing instead.

1st Caller: But, John, I don't really want a house in my back garden.

Old John: Fair enough. Then put in a block of flats. They come up nicely and they have the added advantage of being perennial. In fact, you'll never get rid of them.

2nd Caller: Hello, John. I'm having trouble with weeds.

Old John: Me, too. They keep saying we don't need millions of houses all over the countryside.

2nd Caller: So, how do you deal with them?

Old John: I ignore them completely. I just get on with it and start digging those foundations.

3rd Caller: What sort of plant would you recommend for an English country garden?

Old John: Heavy industrial plant, concrete mixers, earth movers, bulldozers and (cont. 94 MHz)

...copied from Private Eye!

13. It's not easy to see what is sustainable about massive housing developments that will impose enormous traffic burdens on an already overcrowded transport system, and make huge demands on the water resources capacity of the driest region of the country.

14. The Environment Agency's Water Resources Strategy for East of England looks forward 25 years on the basis of the predicted scenarios for climate change. A key issue is that drought conditions are expected to be more frequent due to longer, warmer and drier summers. This will present the area with extremely difficult water supply problems especially as generally development leads to further development! If 500,000 homes plus all the associated infrastructural activities, schools, hospitals, shops, roads, industry etc. are developed by 2021 thereafter presumably another further tranche of houses etc. will be demanded! Sustainable? it seems doubtful.

All these points will be put forward at the appropriate time in response to the public consultation on the RPG 14.

15. However meantime we believe that there would be great value in seeking to protect our part of the Green Belt which is so important in ensuring the good health of the Forest both now and for the future.

16. We would like to see ALL our members consider writing to Mr. John Prescott MP PC at the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 26 Whitehall London SW1A 2WH pointing out the discrepancies between his public statements and what is being proposed for the Green Belt in Epping Forest District.

17. It would be telling to quote the passage in (8) above and point out that far from being well away from the Forest, North Weald airfield – which EFDC is being instructed to develop is next to the Lower Forest and a southern by-pass for Harlow and associated housing development would be within a few hundred metres of Epping Long Green a part of Epping Forest.

18. The EERA suggests that compensatory provision of land to the Metropolitan Green Belt may be considered to offset land taken from the current M.G.B. but 1000 or so acres added to the MGB 50 or more miles away is no good to Epping Forest.

19. One essential element of Green Belts since their creation in 1955 has been their permanence. Once government starts deliberately making major inroads into the M.G.B. the permanence principle has gone and they'll make further inroads.

20. Mr. Prescott should be urged to make clear to the EERA that his public statements re the Government's policy to 'preserve and protect Green Belts in all our Regions' precludes their making massive housing allocations to Epping Forest District which are clearly unsustainable in terms of the protection of Epping Forest.

21. Our Committee has done what it can to avert the calamitous destruction of the Green Belt in this area and we can only hope that our members, who we are sure feel just as strongly as we do about the matter, **will respond and write in good numbers to John Prescott and say 'hands off Epping Forest's Green Belt' (copy to your MP).**

22. A general election is not too far away and politicians are said to be sensitive at such times!

Ed.

THE NATURAL ASPECT

You may remember we reported last summer about the Migratory Locust, from SE Europe that turned up in Upshire as a result of the exceptional weather and winds.

In early February this year large numbers of that attractive migrant butterfly, the Painted Lady, appeared all along the south coast of England. This was exceptionally early. They soon moved inland and were even reported from the north of the country – however by the end of the month frosts would have killed most of them. Several species of migrant moths also arrived at the same time

Painted Lady butterflies usually migrate here from southern Europe and although it is possible that a few are sometimes able to over-winter. This now happens with the related Red Admiral that once used to be largely a migrant. This fact becomes obvious when we see beautiful, perfect, undamaged insects that have clearly recently emerged from their chrysalis case. Normally this occurs with the Painted Lady later in the summer when the offspring of the earlier migrants emerge. Migrants that have travelled hundreds of miles usually look rather tattered and the early Painted Lady migrants are often smaller and paler than those we see later in the year.



Painted Lady: *Most of those seen early in the year are migrants. Later in the summer their offspring appear in perfect condition.*



Comma butterfly: *Now more common than it used to be. A member of the family where most species hibernate as adult butterflies.*

When you are reading this in July you should be able to see fine examples of this species with the other butterflies – the Tortoiseshells, Peacocks, Commas and Red Admirals on thistle heads, michaelmas daisies and buddelia – do they all like blue/mauve flowers? The usual food plant of the caterpillar stage of most of these insects is stinging nettle... so leave a few in a corner of the garden.

Last year I wrote of how regular as a migrant are the Swifts. At the moment in early July, they are screaming between houses and over gardens, but by the first week of August they will be gone on their journey to winter in southern Africa. Just a while ago, in April, a local farmer friend said, "The House Martins and Swallows have arrived but I haven't seen the Swifts yet", I carelessly replied, no they usually arrive about the 2nd May. Later, one of those lucky coincidences occurred. I received an excited phone call at 3-05pm on the 2nd May .. "The Swifts have just arrived exactly on time at 3 o'clock... they're flying around the church tower!". I don't remember saying anything about 3 o'clock!

They stay for just 3 months and then they are gone again.

As science progresses migration becomes even more amazing. I have just read that Swallows, from different parts of Europe, winter in different parts of Africa and in different types of countryside. Scientists have discovered that British Swallows tend to feed in areas of grassland savannah, whilst Swallows from Switzerland hunt in other more wooded habitats. This was established by a chemical analysis of their feathers as Swallows moult and grow new feathers in their winter quarters and differences caused by the dietary variations were detectable! It seems the Swiss Swallows are declining in numbers more than ours are – could this be due to the loss of forest to farmland in West Africa?

Incidentally, some Swallows and House Martins also arrived exceptionally early this year... many were reported in February over a month early!

Now that it is full summer and the grasses of the Forest plains are tall and have almost finished flowering you may notice small clusters of grass heads bent over and woven together to form a 'tent' - look at one of these more closely. If you have not disturbed it, you will see a rather pale long legged spider sitting on top guarding a round ball bigger than herself inside the 'tent'... this is the common hunting spider, Pisaura. Before she weaves the



The Hunting Spider (*Pisaura mirabilis*): *guarding her egg sac.*

'tent' in the grasses she carries her egg sac – a pale round ball – clasped beneath her as she hunts on the ground and among low vegetation. A common name is sometimes the 'nursery-web spider'. Alternatively, a week or two later, when disturbed, the pale blob in the centre of the 'tent' will suddenly dissolve into scores of minute little spiders that will scatter throughout the silk or the grass.

Pisaura is quite a common spider, easily identified as she has rather a long pointed body with a cream stripe down the centre. This spider is also unusual for another reason. The male apparently presents the female with a fly wrapped in a silken shroud so that he can craftily mate with her whilst she is busy eating the fly - although I have never witnessed this happening.

If you are interested in telling male from female spiders! (those of you who are not afraid to remove them from the bath)... the male has a pair of boxing-glove-like palps that he carries just below his face. These have a role as sex organs... receptacles into which he places his sperm so that he may insert it into the female without getting too close! In case she is feeling hungry rather than sexy.

Whilst you are resting in the sun on a log there is another interesting spider that you may commonly see in the Forest. It is very noticeable in the spring when dozens of them may run over the leaf and bracken debris in front of you. Called the Wolf-spider (*Lycosa*), they are small and rather dark and are also hunting spiders that pounce upon their prey rather than build a web. What is noticeable about them as the season progresses is the round blue-ish egg-sac that the female carries beneath her abdomen as she runs about. A little later, in June/July, you may notice her when her abdomen appears to be rather furry. Take a closer look and you will see it is covered with her brood of up to 40 tiny

offspring. After being carried around on mum's back for a week or so they will moult and drop off to begin an independent life.

If you are really interested take a small clear container with you and a lens... spiders are fascinating when viewed in close-up; a few have 6 but most have 8 eyes arranged at the front or on top of their heads – each species has a different pattern.

Whilst relaxing in the garden in the sun you may notice, sitting watching on a wall or fence etc., a very tiny striped spider – black and white – the Zebra spider. Look carefully, its short legs and 'crouched' attitude give a clue to the fact that it can jump! Two of its eyes are like great headlamps; needed to locate and jump accurately upon its prey. But, like a mountaineer it has a safety line of silk just in case of mishap!

If you become 'hooked' enough to keep looking, during August and September you will find a great variety of spiders that have built different forms of snaring webs or traps. These may be in the holes or cracks of tree trunks, in bushes or over brambles and in the grass and on the ground... it really is worth looking.

Ken Hoy

FOREST LAND-MARKS

On the 24th of March, Harry led a Friends' walk from one of Epping Forest's best loved landmarks – Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge in Chingford – to the stone anti-aerial bombing monument that stands opposite Hills Garage on the High Road, Woodford Green. It takes the form of a descending torpedo bomb atop a plinth, surrounded by railings. It is screened from view by an avenue of chestnut trees that line the forest land - a narrow surviving sward next to the old A.11 road. It must be said that, unlike the Hunting Lodge (and Harry Bitten for that matter) it will never be, nor was it ever intended to be, 'a thing of beauty and a joy forever'. But historically speaking, it is of considerable historical interest.

This unique monument was designed by the Purbeck sculptor, Eric Benfield. It is Grade 2 listed, and is the property of its begetter's son, Dr Richard Pankhurst, who lives and works in Addis Ababa, where his mother (1882-1960), resident in Woodford from 1924 to 1956, lies buried amongst the heroes of that Nation. It was unveiled twice: in October, 1935 and in June, 1936. It is known locally as 'the anti-Abyssinian

war monument', though it is in fact rooted in a more distant past, linking the crusade for Votes for Women to a later crusade against the rise of Fascism. The name, Pankhurst, is for ever associated with the suffragette movement. But, of the famous four: Emmeline, the mother, and her three daughters, Christabel, Sylvia and Adela, only Sylvia thought of herself as 'a citizen of the world, who owned no barrier of race or nation'. Hence her raising of the monument and her life-long support of the democratic ideal when challenged by military imperialism and authoritarian bureaucratic communism.

During the First World War, Sylvia Pankhurst witnessed the dire results of Zeppelin raids on London's East End, their perpetrators fired up by imperialist zeal. As she wrote on one of her banners: In this war, there is a Nation united in anguish. It is a Nation of Mothers. When she left Bow in 1924, she came to Woodford with Silvio Corio, an Italian journalist employed on her Dreadnought newspaper, intending to record her experiences in autobiography, and establish herself on the lecture circuit. From her partner, and his friends in exile, she learned that, despite the admiration felt in some quarters for Benito Mussolini's dictatorship, there was much more to Fascist rule than making the trains run on time. The on-going rise of the gulag society in the USSR and the concentration camp 'solutions' imposed by National Socialism in Germany, further increased her pessimism as to the future of the democratic ideal.

When the couple moved into Vine Cottage, (demolished in 1939), their frugal economy was based on running it as a tea shop, renamed Red Cottage. Its position promised many thirsty customers as there was a bus terminus between them and the Horse and Wells pub on the other side of the road. The Suffragette Movement, written in a garden shed in the back garden, opens with a description of the trees of Epping Forest that surrounded her home. And in 1927, her only son, Richard, was born.

In 1932, a World Disarmament Conference was held in Geneva. David Lloyd George represented the British Empire. This event is commemorated on the front of the monument, placed in the garden of Red Cottage, with the inscription: To those who, in 1932, upheld the right to use bombing planes. The RAF was defending the Empire from attacks by tribes revolting against British rule on the North West frontier

between India and Afghanistan. This policy was known as 'control without occupation'. Cheap and devastatingly effective, it was masterminded by Bomber Harris, he of the thousand bomber raids against Germany in the Second World War. Another inscription reads: This monument is raised as a protest against war in the air.

When Haile Selassie came to Europe to appeal to the League of Nations (the forerunner of the UNO) for the right to buy modern weapons with which to fight Benito Mussolini's invading forces, he met Miss Pankhurst at the Ethiopian Legation. Mussolini's airmen were targetting the Abyssinian population with mustard gas bombs. In the Emperor, Miss Pankhurst found 'a hero who never deserts his cause'. He assured her that he intended to establish parliamentary democracy when circumstances allowed. Her monument names a member of the Imperial Legation present at its unveiling. She began editing a weekly newspaper, *New Times and Ethiopia News*. It publicised the continuing struggle against the fascist invaders, the scandalous show trials in Russia, the appalling anti-semitism in Nazi controlled areas, the Spanish Civil War, fought to defend a democratically elected government. In one of her leading articles, she congratulates Winston Churchill on his outspoken attack on the Appeasement policies of the Chamberlain government. In 1941, her headlines honour the liberation of the capital, Addis Ababa by General Orde Wingate, at the head of a British army. At the end of the second World war, she failed to persuade the authorities to put on trial those Italians who had committed atrocities against Ethiopians during their occupation. She went on editing her newspaper (it could be bought in branches of W. H. Smiths) until she left Woodford in 1956 to set up home in Ethiopia, at the invitation of the Emperor himself. He had called on her on his way to the Carribean, where he would be feted by adoring crowds, including Rastafarians, who regard him as a Godlike figure.

Although the monument does not resonate in the public mind, its meaning has been best expressed by the poet W.H. Auden, who wrote in September 1939, about 'ironic points of light' which shine out 'wherever the just exchange their messages.' Its opportunity for publicity came with the Cold war era. Peace groups highlighted the existence of both the monument and the newly constructed Control and Command Centre in Wanstead Park

by walking between the two war-related sites, picnicking with their families in fine summer weather. In 1995, a marching band led a procession from George Green in Wanstead to mark its 50th anniversary. As a grand finale there were Morris dancers, (called Esperance after a group that had raised funds for the suffragettes before the Great War), and a choir sang Ethel Smyth's March of the Women, which she had conducted from her Holloway cell, waving a toothbrush between the bars. In April, Kate Adie spoke about it in a UK History programme called Women and War, and it now appears in the needlepoint banner made to mark the centenary of the United Free Church in Woodford Green.

The monument is now listed in the National Inventory of War Memorials. This can be accessed on the Internet via the Imperial War Museum alongside the other war memorials in the Borough, under the heading, Redbridge. It has survived two acts of vandalism which have threatened its existence: one in the 30s, when local fascists covered it with pitch and in the 1990s, the bomb itself was stolen and thrown into the Forest near the Woodford New Road. The police recovered it, took it for safe-keeping to the cellar of Ilford Town Hall until its fins (which were broken) were restored. The whole monument was then sandblasted, and a plastic plaque was affixed to the base, as the lettering is increasingly weathered and hard to decipher. Funding came from the Borough of Redbridge, the Heritage of London Trust and Dr Richard Pankhurst.

Mrs Lynda Rochester, who lives near the monument, surprised and delighted the Friends by serving them with delicious coffee and biscuits before they set off for home. As for the monument, quite unlike the beautiful Hunting Lodge, it will never be the object of much attention. Its grim presence remains as a constant reproach to the failure of democratic politics to honour life rather than death. As at now, it has dropped out of memory, lost in the mists of time and human forgetfulness.

Two autobiographical works: *The Suffragette Movement* and *The Home Front* and two biographies: *Sylvia Pankhurst, Artist and Crusader* by Richard Pankhurst and *A Crusading Life* by Shirley Harrison.

Her role in times of war has a mention in: *Haile Selassie's Wars*, Anthony Moeckler.

Sylvia Ayling

PREDATOR CONTROL IN THE FOREST

One of the reports made to the May meeting of the Epping Forest & Open Spaces Committee was entitled 'Corvid Control and Songbird Populations'.

The purpose of the report is to provide the Committee with the latest research concerning the effect of crows, magpies, rooks and jackdaws on songbird population and the effectiveness of control programmes.

Sport related research was quoted but this concentrated particularly on the result of corvid 'control' on game birds and provides little evidence in respect of songbirds.

Conservation research by BTU, RSPB and English Nature is mainly based on data examination rather than on project based research and while all these bodies accept that corvids do not materially affect songbird populations in the long term the results cannot be regarded as conclusive.

The various Corporation open spaces have collated their own current predator control practices. The Epping Forest section indicates that there is no corvid control at present either on the buffer lands or in the Forest itself. No control currently is thought necessary to protect songbird populations but there is a positive emphasis on habitat management, coppicing of scrub etc.

Attached to the report is a paper by the Biodiversity Working Group 2004 entitled Pest Control Matrix. In relation to Epping Forest this confirms that no corvid control occurs at present but indicates that localised shooting of the Grey Squirrel takes place but is of low priority, and that rabbits on golf courses are shot, and this is given medium priority.

The fact that RSPB, BTO and English Nature accept that corvids and their predatory habits do not affect songbird populations cannot be set aside lightly. But undoubtedly the large number of magpies around of recent years, is bound to register in many people's minds that there appears to be a connection.

In 1923 Buxton, in his Epping Forest book, wrote of the magpie "this predatory foe to other birds as become very uncommon hereabouts, there are three pairs breeding near here in Waltham-Abbey. I have not seen any on the Forest recently and they should be protected when they occur. A pair

used to breed at Knighton but I have not observed them recently".

It's a very different story now!

But perhaps the woodland birds decline can be laid at the feet — or claws — of another beastie? The grey squirrel. The British Trust for Ornithology has apparently pointed the finger at this imported 'tree rat', as the possible cause of the shortage of lesser spotted woodpeckers, willow warblers and a variety of other formerly numerous residents of our woodland. I know that we've all got used to seeing grey squirrels in the Forest and in our gardens and I must say that until recently I've been ready to accept them albeit reluctantly, as a permanent replacement for the native red squirrel. However now I'm not so sure. The greys clearly cause considerable damage to song and woodland birds attacking both eggs and fledglings. They also damage timber trees and are 'controlled' by many owners who manage their woodlands for quality timber.

The red squirrel doubtless would do the same kind of thing but its a much smaller creature and could not inflict so much damage.

At Newborough Warren on Anglesey a serious attempt is being made to breed reds and at the same time to eradicate greys from the island. The programme also involves culling greys on their nearby mainland haunts over the Menai Straits Bridge.

There appears to be some evidence that reds fare better in coniferous woodlands and that by encouraging them there and eliminating greys from those areas it may be possible for the two populations to exist together reds in coniferous uplands and the greys in deciduous lowlands!

If you want to see reds, and they are lovely little animals, next time you drive along the M6 to the Lake District take a deviation to the coast at Formby between Liverpool and Southport. The National Trust which owns part of the area sells peanuts to feed to the numerous reds!

But perhaps the answer, if we really want to save the red squirrel, is for there to be a nationwide attempt to eliminate the greys from the country altogether. This might be done by culling, drey disturbance, contraception etc. Clearly this would be very controversial but there does seem to be the first glimmerings of a mood to 'do something about the greys'.

Harry Bitten

REPTILIAN RAMBLE

I had visited my adder patch (and grass snake patch) a few days previously on an unseasonably warm mid-March day. The sky was blue, the sun shone and it was approximately 60°F (16°C) just right I thought for adders emerging from hibernation although their periods of hibernation can be rather intermittent. Whenever there's a warm spell, say in January or February they will emerge and enjoy the sun and winter warmth in a sheltered spot.

Not a hint of grass snake on their patch but when I quietly approached the adder patch perched on the summit of the hill inside the depths of Monk Wood I found four, two apparent females, larger in girth than the more slim-line males and they seem to have a less definite colour pattern, more softened in tone than the males who sport their more distinctive colouration no doubt to attract the opposite sex. They were mingling amongst the low growth of bramble scenting the air with their flickering tongues and periodically sliding closer to each other to make tentative physical contact. They seemed very relaxed and had probably hibernated together in a nearby cosy, dry and well aerated nook deep down amongst a birch tree's roots.

As cold blooded animals, the fact that they cluster together when hibernating allows them to generate warmth and maintain a life saving temperature which allows them to survive cold weather periods.

I was quite annoyed with myself. I hadn't brought my camera — pocket size with instant technology and zoom



lens with me. Another lost opportunity. I watched their relaxed meanderings for some twenty minutes, then quietly left. I didn't want to disturb them.

The following Sunday; another sun-blest day, the temperature once again about 60°F, probably more at adder level when they're enjoying the March sun in their sheltered situation amongst the dry, crisp leaves of yesterday trapped amongst the low lying brambles.

I re-visited them, this time with an enthusiastic, keen, eyed partner, my energetic eleven year old, grandson and, with my camera zoom lens extended, ready for action.

First though, a quick look at the grass snake patch, an area of mature ling heather growing bush like on a south facing slope above one of Monk Wood's meandering streams which no doubt presents the grass snakes with a regular supply of food, scrumptious frogs and toads. Sharp eyed Miles spotted a common lizard — I only heard it. Then I disturbed my first grass snake of the year, a small one, perhaps some 30 inches in length or so that as usual it dashed away at speed into the jungle of heather. Miles missed that one.

Then to the adder patch. Before we got too close I told him the

rules, No talking, coughing or farting (he laughed), walk quietly and softly to avoid making noise and ground vibration and no fast movements, take your time and check every part of the patch methodically and carefully. These adders, as I'd already found out, possess protective colouration that perfectly matches the litter of leaves and small branches they live amongst. They are exceptionally hard to distinguish when they lay still and coiled in silent repose which is why so few forest walkers ever see them.

We started searching. I couldn't see one but sharp eyed Miles did and then our eyes getting acclimatised, we discovered numbers two, three, four and finally a fifth one. The photographs clearly show how difficult it is to see these rather secretive, unobtrusive snakes. They are, in fact quite well distributed in the northern part of Epping Forest and are more common than supposed. On one humid cloudy day (their favourite climate they do not like too much sunshine or high temperatures) I counted 37 on one small part of one forest heath; I gave up then. So, if you intend to go adder hunting, do your preparatory homework, obey the rules and go with one focused aim, to find adders. And just to show off before we left, I stroked the tail of one of them. Mile's response, 'you're really mad Grandad' — I liked that.

But he's keen to go again a.s.a.p. Happy adder hunting and take care. They are our only venomous snake and they bite if you upset them so, treat them with respect, they deserve it.

Peter Relph



THE BEECH TREE

(Fagus sylvatica)

When you walk in the Forest do you know the four dominant trees? Most people know the oak and the birch and perhaps many will know the Common Beech... but fewer will be sure of distinguishing it from the Hornbeam.

Both have similar oval leaves, but with these differences: the beech leaf is less pointed, smooth and shiny and is not serrated along its edge. Also it usually has only 7-8 pairs of parallel veins whereas the hornbeam usually has 11-13 pairs. The edge of the hornbeam leaf is serrated and the surface of the leaf has a corrugated appearance. For differences in winter, the branches of the hornbeam will look less sturdy and although also generally silvery in colour are marked by a wavy lacework of silver streaks that is quite distinctive.

The majority of the high canopy trees in Epping Forest are of the four trees already mentioned - the oak, birch, (both have 2 species) and the beech and hornbeam.

Most beech are to be found in the central and northern parts of the Forest on the higher and dryer slopes in association with the birch. There, the wide network of their shallow root systems, the dark shade throughout the summer and consequent lack of undergrowth produces the typical high pollarded beech woodland of the Forest.

It is sometimes said that the Romans introduced the beech to Britain but this is not so. Pollen has been found in soil levels dating from



Beech leaves: Shiny with no serration



Hornbeam Leaves: Serrated edge to the leaves

6000BC thus the tree is truly native to Britain as the English Channel separated us from the rest of Europe 500 years later.

However at one site in the north of the Forest pollen evidence suggests it was as late as the eight or ninth centuries AD before the beech (and the hornbeam) made any significant appearance in Epping Forest.

In Medieval times beech seems to have been used for providing fuel rather than timber for building and thus it was grown as coppice or pollards - this was certainly the case in our Forest. In other parts of the country its use as fuel was associated with the iron and glass making industries. By the eighteenth century landowners and their landscape designers were using beech trees to decorate parks and the landscape generally. Also during the last two centuries beech has been used by the furniture industry as the dense texture of the wood makes it very suitable for turning.

For the curious there is a recipe for making a liquor from the young leaves - however when I made some the result was disappointingly oily in taste.

Soon after the beech seems to appear in the pollen record of Epping Forest its importance as a fuel is suggested by what are generally considered to be great coppiced stools or circular clumps of beech 'trees' to be found in the northern parts of the Forest. By their huge size some of these groups of beech - if originally coppice growth - must have been harvested in Saxon times. Later, some

two or three centuries ago they continued to be cut for fuel but as pollarded trees.

Historically the beech, like the oak, had an early importance as its nuts like the acorn were a source of food for pigs. In the Domesday records woods were valued by the number of pigs it was considered each parish's woodland could support. Under the Forest Law this became the 'right of pannage'.

In the month of May the floor of beech woods is covered with the spent 'male' catkins that were little balls of stamens hanging on slender hairy stems. When walking under beeches at this time of year one's boots or shoes will be covered with the wind blown yellow pollen. The 'female' flowers, which of course eventually become the nuts, are small but very attractive. During the summer the green spiky nut cases grow rapidly and by the autumn each sheds a pair of three sided brown nuts.

Unfortunately in recent years some of the Forest's finest beeches have died and many others are clearly doomed as they are suffering great stress. This is caused by the dryer summers and it is thought air pollution, or by disease brought on by the stressful conditions. The signs of this stress are clearly visible on many trees... look for very small leaves and dying back at the ends of the topmost branches. Often the stressed tree makes a final effort of species-survival by producing one last increased crop of fruit.

Some of the finest old beech trees grow in Great Monks Wood, others can be found in Epping Thicks. In Monks Wood pollarding ceased some thirty years earlier and perhaps occurred less often than it did in other areas - as there were no common lopping rights. Thus the trees there are bigger and more impressive, but many are dying as age and stress affects them. Consequently the nature of the woodland has changed as large gaps appear in the canopy and the old beeches are replaced by the young trees and brambles that start to re-colonise the new sunny patches. Thus the long but constantly changing woodland cycle starts all over again. This process can be seen in an even more advanced stage in Hill Wood just below High Beach Church.

The timber industry has introduced species of beech tree from South America. These are often called the 'Chilean Beech'. Two species have been used, the Roble Beech



Beech Flower: The 'female' flower - spent male catkins can be seen below.

(*Nothofagus obliqua*) and the Raoul (*Nothofagus procera*). For the forester they have the advantage of being quicker growing hardwoods and the sapwood seems to be distasteful to squirrels who cause damage in plantations of our native beech. If you wish to see examples of these two 'southern' beeches there are young trees growing in the Warren Wood plantation of Copped Hall. Some can be found a few metres inside the boundary bank along Crown Hill, east of the Copped Hall gates. Both have more pairs of veins than the Common Beech... the Roble usually has between 8-11 and the Raoul averages between 16-18 pairs.

Ken Hoy

MAY FAYRE 2004 SWAINES GREEN, EPPING

The FoEF stall at the first May Fayre held since the mid 1930/40's restoring a fayre that traces its history to 1295 was set up by, Jim Gimson, Gareth Browne & his mother Paula and myself, and we were ready for visitors by 10.30am.

Thanks also to a little help from Paul Cook at Essex Wildlife Trust for lending us some tape to help stabilise our old display.

The Fayre was set up very nicely round the May Pole with straw bail seats and in between the trees creating a nice friendly atmosphere.

Unfortunately the organisers had not put up signs or any notice of the event in Epping High Street or even directions to the Car Parking (A lesson learned for next time no doubt) but had very successfully advertised the event in the local papers, church's, schools etc.

As the afternoon approached Mary Taylor arrived to help on the stall, shortly followed by the late Lord Murray and his wife Heather. The crowds then started to arrive and from about 12 to 3 our expanded band of helpers which included Irene Buchan, Robin & George Gaine, Bill Dexter, Sue & Mike McKinley were kept busy giving out our information about the Forest and the Friends. All to the sounds of Folk music and of course the May dancing.

We were able to welcome 10 new members to the Friends during the day including 5 who offered to help in future stalls, distribute newsletters or help in other ways.

A tiring but enjoyable day. Thanks to all who took part and helped.

Robert Levene.

REPORT FROM THE EPPING FOREST AND OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE

Hitherto the Epping Forest and Open Spaces Committee has met on a monthly basis, viz 10 times a year. This gives the public (sometimes 3 or 4 people including your representatives) the opportunity of hearing the discussion of the agenda items even if there is no opportunity to contribute!

However it has now been decided that there will be in future a meeting only every two months. In proposing this the Court of Common Council was influenced by the desire to reduce demands on members and give consideration to the extent of delegation for action given to officers.

Some members of the E.F.O.S. Committee opposed these proposals on the grounds that if they hadn't been prepared to accept the demands on their time they wouldn't have put themselves forward in the first place. The Verderers also had some misgivings about the proposal since their position vis a vis the Conservators is given status in the Epping Forest Act 1878 and they were concerned that their role would be weakened. However the Committee agreed with the proposal and it was accepted that the Verderers should have regular meetings at The Warren with the superintendent and the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Committee. The position will be reviewed in 2005

These will presumably be private meetings with no members of the public present so that one effect of the new proposals will be to reduce even further the position of the public in relation to the decision making process.

Management Plan

The Epping Forest Management Plan 2004 - 2010 was considered and approved by the Committee. This was a foregone conclusion because the terms had already been discussed by the Plan Sub-committee, although one member was unhappy about the draft because his criticisms and observations at the Sub-Committee had not, he thought, been conveyed into the final document.

The Friends were not consulted about the Management Plan and we did not get a sight of it in any form. Indeed we haven't received a copy of the approved Plan.

A few weeks ago the Conservators gave a presentation to the North Chingford Community Council as part of which the public was urged to come forward and indicate the way they thought the Forest should relate to users and what they appreciated about the Forest. But what is all this public consultation for if all major decisions about the Forest and its management are taken behind closed doors with the public not only not able to participate but not even being present?

Access to Buffer Land

The Committee had before it a proposal to consult with stakeholders (groups represented on Forest Forum, tenants, neighbours, staff, English Nature, countryside Agency, DEFRA and others) for a proposal to provide permissive open access for walkers to:

- 1) land at Woodredon north of the M25
- 2) land at Warlies Park
- 3) land at Copped Hall south of the east/west estate road
- 4) establish suitable permissive horse rides on the above.

The report mentioned the problems caused when owners allow their dogs to disturb wildlife and points out that currently there are no byelaws on Buffer lands that can be enforced by Epping Forest keepers. Additionally other illegal activities such as hare coursing are said to be common.

Because of these problems no further public access is to be accorded in respect of Copped Hall land north of the estate road or to Galley Hill Wood. But this will be reviewed in the light of the lessons learned assuming that the stakeholders support the proposal!

We assume that as stakeholders we will be consulted on this! Interestingly no mention is made of the extensive Buffer land at Woodredon south of the M25!

BLASTED OAK

In response to our Spring Newsletter:

On 13th March Stewart Runciman, Head Green-Keeper of Woodford Golf Course, phoned to say that the 'Blasted Oak' finally gave up the ghost on Saturday night 20th December 2003. He said that he thought it had finally been weakened by fires being lit at the base of the trunk during that year's hot summer. The 'Blasted Oak' is now a horizontal marker instead of a vertical feature.

DEAR EDITOR

On a glorious day in June last summer I finally made the pilgrimage back to Chingford and the forest after a much longer gap than I had ever intended.

It is interesting how much one tends to expect things to remain more or less as they were in past times whereas nature is constantly changing and moving on. My main purpose was to revisit my old home territory of Chingford Plain, Bury Wood etc.

I recently unearthed some earlier photographs taken of the area near the trough/drinking fountain on the edge of Chingford Plain where the wooden tea hut (one of two originally) used to stand. In the photographs the four oak trees that enclosed the hut stand out clearly but now they have merged into the edge of the forest and I had some difficulty finding them. Have you any information on what happened to the long vanished tea hut on the edge of the plain. It was the base for my forest wanderings from the mid 1940's through to the early 1960's when I reluctantly moved away to Surrey on a career move. I heard some years ago that it burnt down in somewhat mysterious circumstances and the four oak trees are certainly quite badly fire-scarred. Further into the forest, heading for Cuckoo Pits I lost my bearings completely after turning off the Three Plank Ride – all the old glades and many of the paths are long gone now and new mountain-bike tracks seem to have evolved instead. I was taken by surprise several times by bikers and had to move out of their way rather smartly.

It really was marvellous to hear once again the larks singing above the plain and the greater spotted woodpeckers calling in the forest. I know that the numbers of the former are diminishing but both seemed to be abundant on this visit, in fact the woodpeckers appeared to be more numerous than I remember from past years.

During the 1950's I also knew the resident forest Keeper Ted Riley quite well and have often wondered if he is still with us – albeit long since retired.

I had to limit my visit somewhat last summer but it is difficult to express just how much pleasure and happiness I derived from that all too brief trip back to some of my old haunts.

Robert Hall

HOUSE MARTINS

We seem to have noticed more house martins flying around Chingford this year. There used to be plenty about and they were a common sight scooping-up mud from the pools on the horseride alongside Forest View the houses of which provided nest sites.

However there are now mostly apartment blocks on Forest View and the horseride has been relaid and no longer has muddy pools, result misery – for the martins!

But on a morning walk on 7th June Harry and I saw a flock of half-a-dozen or so on a mud patch on the car park on the Plain, presumably gathering material for nest building or repairing. We were glad to see, nearer home, that martins were flying into nests on houses on the Drive. We hope that they are welcomed!

Peg Bitten

PASTURE RIGHTS IN EPPING FOREST

The ancient practice of pasturing animals goes back in records to the 8th Century, when reference to this was made by Ethelbald, who ruled Mercia 716 – 757.

Much treasured by the common folk was the 'Right of Pannage'. Pigs were allowed to range freely and feed on acorns, roots and beech mast. In fact they became effective ploughs and fertilisers as they grubbed through the leaf-mould. The pigs were ringed, and allowed on forest wastes from 15 days after Michaelmas (4th September – 8th November) when fruit was on the ground.

A 1790 Forest Court order allowed two cows or one horse for 'every £4 rental per annum' But thanks to a charitable trust the poorer families were excluded from this payment. This helped towards preserving the privilege of every family in the Parish, to take advantage of the right of 'Common of Pasture.' However, between 21st June and 21st July a 'Fence Law' prevailed stating all cattle were to be removed from the forest whilst the deer were left to drop their young. Those who disobeyed, had their animals impounded during this period and auctioned off at a local market.

*From the researches of
Minnie Fenton of Waltham Abbey
(WAHS newsletter March 2004)*

ANNUAL CENTENARY WALK THROUGH EPPING FOREST 2004

On Sunday 19th September EVERYONE is invited to join the Friends and the Ramblers on their annual walk through Epping Forest from South to North based on the Centenary Walk established in 1978 to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the passing of the Epping Forest Act 1878. It was that legislation, promoted by the Corporation of the City of London that restored lost lands to the Forest (it had dwindled to less than half its present size!) and secured its future as a public open space.

09.00 hours sharp – the walk starts at the junction of Capel Road and Forest Drive near Manor Park Station.

Thereafter approx. timing will be:

10.00 hours – Green Man Roundabout, Leytonstone (meet at centre of roundabout).

11.00 hours – County Hotel, Oak Hill, Woodford.

12.00 noon – Queen Elizabeth Hunting Lodge/Butlers Retreat, Chingford.

13.30–14.15 hours – lunch stop at the Robin Hood P.H. (Epping New Road).

After lunch the walk will continue via Loughton Camp, Great Monk Wood, Deer Sanctuary and Forest's "Buffer" lands to arrive at Bell Common Epping and the end of the walk at around 17.30 hours.

Local M.Ps and Conservators and officers of the Forest will participate in the event as will representatives from the Council for the Protection of Rural Essex, R.S.P.B., Essex Wildlife Trust and the British Naturalists Trust.

The Walk is around 16 miles long and is OPEN TO ALL you don't have to belong to anything! There will be ample stops and pauses when short talks will be given on the Forest and its management and history in furtherance of the Walk's objective to promote the appreciation and knowledge of this priceless public open space.

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

WALKS REPORTS

APRIL 30 ALONG THE RIVER CHING

A walk from the car park of the Victorian lake - Connaught Water - towards Chingford Hatch. (We didn't get that far!)

On a mild afternoon some 14 of us walked around the lake. We saw the usual magpies & crows, robin & pied wagtail, mallard, tufted duck, a few mandarin ducks, coots, moorhens, a great crested grebe, a barnacle goose — which seems to have adopted the flock of Canada Geese — and two fluffy, yellow Canada Goslings. We looked at the construction of the lake — the high bank, which pens the water from the Ching Brook and the stream which rises in Pear Tree Plain; and the stout concrete bridge which has replaced the romantic rustic bridge at the commencement of the Ching River. Following the Ching, as it meandered southward, we had to note our passing from Essex into London. On the other side of Rangers Road the scrubland merged into woodland with occasional very old pollards. There were tiny caterpillars hanging on threads (essential food for young birds) and even one small, green/gold shiny, long-horn moth. The oak & hornbeam catkins were nearly over but we found a few of the round, beech catkins; & lots of plump, green willow fruits, due to split and distribute their fluffy seeds soon. Some blackthorn was still in flower; & crab-apple & hawthorn. A lovely time of year with so many fresh shades of green.

We crossed Whitehall Road and meandered along as far as the well-grassed and overgrown remains of the defunct, Victorian, Woodford Sewage Works. Then back, looking at the old wood-bank which separates the coppice woodland of Hatch Grove, re-coppiced a year or two ago, and compared this with the section just north, which was not coppiced recently but still bears ridges and furrows of some past agricultural use.

Irene Buchan

MAY 14, BACK TO GENESIS

It was cold, the thermometer had dropped to -4° C overnight, and was barely above freezing at ten o'clock on Theydon Bois village green, but 18 intrepid explorers were there, looking forward to a walk. He introduced himself as our leader for the morning, told us the Green was part of the Forest and looked after by the Parish: and that the avenue of oaks across the Green had been planted (he told us)



Walkers near Genesis Slade

possibly to commemorate Queen Victoria's accession in 1837. Which makes the trees about 167 years old, and hence according to a rule of thumb that trees grow at a rate of one metre of circumference every 40 years, then these trees should all measure about 4.2m around their trunks. (But one can see they are not all of the same diameter and this will be the subject of another article for discussion in the next edition of this Newsletter). In the meantime, on with our walk. From the Green we crossed the road, via the pedestrian crossing, bringing the roar of Theydon's traffic to a halt, on through the village shopping centre, and for some 300m down Forest Drive. Here is where the proper walk starts as we navigate the mud through the gateway into a field with permissive access. Following the footpath, with fine views of the Central Line to our right, we came to 'buffer land' owned by The Corporation of London. This route took us past Little Gregories Farm, where starlings and fieldfare were moving in front of us through the hedgerow trees. Then, after crossing a stile into a green lane we again saw the flock of fieldfare in an adjacent field, but a sparrow hawk swooped from a nearby oak and they were away.

The public footpath lead us through part of Great Gregories yard, a farm owned by the Corporation which they used for the storage of equipment, and storage of architectural stonework awaiting restoration of City buildings.

From the Farm he led us along a lane past some fine houses into Theydon Road, which we crossed near the Bell Common, where the M25 was built in a cut and cover tunnel, the cricket

pitch being replaced over the motorway. From here we turned for home along the Green Ride, reputedly cut for Queen Victoria's ride through, in her carriage, when she visited in 1882. It also forms part of the Centenary Walk, as shown on the Epping Forest Map, but from year to year the walkers sometimes take a detour.

We continued south until we reached the Four Wantz (wantz, an old Essex word for junction of ways) where we forked right along a grass track through the Epping Thicks, a descriptive name for this part of the Forest where the management regime is known as non intervention, or do nothing.

The ground steadily rose as we made our way along this green ride to Ambresbury Banks, which appear as defensive earthworks thought to be constructed around 500BC or a bit later, on top of the forest ridge at about 116m above sea level. After walking up, down and along the ancient bank, he then led us along a far muddier, less imposing bank with ditch, a younger, but still historical earthwork. This, he said, was a tank trap, forming part of the defensive ring constructed around London in 1939/40.

Arriving back on the Green Ride, we were just north of Long Running, where the cattle grazing has kept birch and purple moor grass down, in an effort to encourage the heather. On this area of heath a few dead trees have been left standing as song posts for the tree pipits which have, and will again this year we hope, nest here during the summer. He also told us the heathland was a good habitat for adders, and on a warm spring morning a quiet stroll across the area may find

a basking snake. (He also added that piles of logs were left about the Forest so that the adders could multiply).

Since we were still near the Forest ridge, the rest of our walk 'Back to Genesis', was downhill, along the ride through attractive woodland, then into the open to enjoy the sunny view across Genesis Slade. (For a derivation of the name see *Getting to Know Epping Forest*; Ken Hoy 2002.) From here, a short stroll through a side road brought us to the Theydon Green where our ways parted to the various places we had parked our cars, but not without a 'thank you' to our walk leader, who responded by saying he hoped we had all enjoyed the outing, and trusted we would come again another day.

Your ACE Reporter

OBJECTS OF THE FRIENDS OF EPPING FOREST

taken from our constitution.

To provide a *consultative* link between the administrators of Epping Forest and members of the public who have at heart the preservation of the forest as defined in the Epping Forest Act 1878, and particularly the following provisions:

- a) The keeping of the forest unenclosed as an open space for the recreation of the public and granting to the public the right to use it.
The preservation as far as possible of the natural aspect of the forest.
- b) To promote and/or support measures likely to be of benefit to Epping Forest and oppose measures which could be detrimental to it.

MR FOWLER'S BOOK BEQUEST

Following Mr Fowler's book bequest, the Friends received £99. Many thanks to his brother and family for passing on these valuable books.

Please send letters for inclusion in the next Newsletter to the Secretary and Editor:
Mrs P Bitten,
9 Frederica Road,
Chingford, E4 7AL
"See you all at the FofEF stalls throughout the summer,

Ed"

FofEF

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Walks

June 26 Saturday, 12noon - 5pm.

Visit the FofEF stall at Chingford Village Festival.

**July 17, Saturday 10.30am
King Harold's Park**

A walk along green lanes, which are detached parts of Epping Forest, with wide, open views. Lunch available at the nearby King Harold's Head PH. Meet at Bumbles Green, which is on the B194 between Waltham Abbey and Broadley Common. Car parking is on a turning just off the roundabout.

Leader: Bill Dexter, GR 408 049

**August 6, Friday 10am
Looking for Butterflies and Dragonflies in the Cornmill Meadows Dragonfly Sanctuary.**

Meet in the Cornmill Meadows car-park which is the first turning on the left along the Crooked Mile B194 from Waltham Abbey.

Leader: Iris Newbery, GR 384 016

**September 19th
Sunday 9am-5.30pm 20th
CENTENARY WALK**

From Manor Park in south of Epping Forest to Epping in the north. See Newsletter page 9 for details.

Leader: Harry Bitten, GR 419 860

**October 15th, Friday 10am.
A walk around Ambresbury Banks and St Thomas's Quarters.**

Meet in either of the Jack's Hill car parks, which are on the south and north sides of the B172, halfway between the Wake Arms roundabout and Theydon Bois.

Leader: Ken Hoy, GR 435 995

**November 7th, Sunday 10.30am.
An autumn walk around Copped Hall and the Warren Plantation.**

Meet in Ravener's farmyard, Copthall Green, Upshire. Travelling north on the B1393 Epping New Road, take the first turning on the left after the Wake Arms roundabout (ignoring the entrance to the closed-off Lodge Road). Follow the road (Crown Hill) for approx. three-quarters of a mile towards Upshire. Ravener's Farm is on the right just after passing under the M25.

**Leader: Ian Cox
(EF Forester & Head of Works)
GR 424 007**

Stalls

Visit the FoEF Stall at:
Chingford Village Festival 26 June
12.00-5.00
Forest Festival on Chingford Plain
5 Sept 11.00 - 4.00
Wanstead Festival 19 Sept

Advance Notice:

**November 25th Forest Supper at
Hawkey Hall, Thursday (not Friday)**

OTHER DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

EF Conservation Volunteers

We meet at the Warren at 9.30, off Warren Hill in Loughton, and we aim to leave promptly at 9.45. Wear sturdy working clothes and boots, and carry waterproofs. Hard hats and gloves are provided when necessary, as are waders for pond tasks. Bring food and drink if you are staying all day. We usually return to the Warren at about 3.30.

Sunday 30 May – Yardley Hill/Yates Meadow
Sunday 6 June – Oak Hill
Tuesday 15 June – Fairmead Bottom
Saturday 19 June – Wanstead Park Wildlife Weekend
Sunday 20 June – Wanstead Park
Sunday 4 July – Dulsmead Bog
Tuesday 13 July – Ditches Ride
Sunday 25 July – Strawberry Hill
Sunday 1 August – Forest School Pond
Tuesday 10 August – Blackweir Pond aka Lost Pond
Sunday 15 August – Wellington Hill and Bog
Sunday 22 August – Yardley Lane
Sunday 29 August – Bulrush Pond
Tuesday 14 September – Potato Pond
Sunday 19 September – Broad Strood Rises
Sunday 26 September – Earl's Path Pond

For more info contact Peter Lyons
020 8529 3060

Essex Wildlife Trust

Epping Forest Local Group

Sunday July 4 2004

Make Hay at the Roding Valley Nature Reserve – Guided walk followed by a hay making demonstration, led by Paul Cook and Tricia Moxey. Why not bring a picnic? Meet: David Lloyd Car Park at 10:30 am.

Sunday 17 October **FUNGI at GERNON BUSHES**

Led by Tricia Moxey and Brian McGhie Warden. A splendid forest

reserve, rich in fungi, fascinating at this time of year.

Meet: Nature Reserve entrance at Coopersale at 10:30 am.

EF Field Centre Courses

Sat 10 July Discovering Wildflowers
Sun 18 July Insects, Spiders and other Invertebrates
Sun 25 July Dragonflies and Damselflies
Sat 10-Sun 11 July Interpreting and Imagining Landscape
Sun 18 July Insects, Spiders and other Invertebrates
Sun 25 July Dragonflies and Damselflies
Sat 7 August Discovering Butterflies
Sat 7-Sun 8 August Mammal Identification
Sat 4 Sept Grasshoppers & Bush Crickets
Sun 5 Sept Shield Bugs
Sat 18 Sept Wanstead Park
Sun 26 Sept Discovering Badgers
Sun 19 Sept Left Behind in Epping Forest
Sat 25 Sept Using Environmental Crafts with Young People
Sun 31 Oct Autumn Walk

For further details or to make a booking please call 020 8502 8500

EF Information Centre

Please note that all events are free unless otherwise stated

Pond Dipping

Sat 3 July, 2.00pm - 4.00pm
Meet in Jubilee Pond Car Park, Lake House Road (GR 401 862).

Story Telling

Sunday 4 July
A childrens' event at the Information Centre, High Beach.

Western Vistas

Sunday, 11 July, 10.30am-12.30pm
A guided walk led by Sally Hayns along the western edge of the Forest through some flower rich fields. Meet in the car park at the Owl Public House, Lippits, Hill, High Beach. Parking by kind permission of the landlord. (GR 399 969)

A Tudor Picnic at The Hunting Lodge

Sunday 18 July, 11.00am-4.00pm at Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge, Chingford
Join *Dance Royale* for a Tudor style picnic.

Make a Tudor Toy! Thursday 29 July, 1.00pm to 4.00pm at Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge, Chingford

Falconry Day Sunday 1 August, 11.00am to 4.00pm at Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge, Chingford.



Church Road, High Beach

The Centre is holding its
**Annual Open Day on
Saturday October 2nd October
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

Registered Charity No: 1102119

Rambling Hedges

Sunday 8 August, 10.30am- 12.30pm
A guided walk led by Tricia Moxey to visit this attractive part of the Forest. Meet at the end of Hemnall Street, Epping. (GR 455 016)

Feather Pictures

Tuesday 10 August, 1.00pm - 4.00pm at the Temple, Wanstead Park.

Evening Bat Walk

Wednesday 11 August, 8.00pm
(Meet at the Tea Hut, Wanstead Park (GR 415 872).

Scrapboard pictures

Thursday 12 August, 1.00pm-4.00pm at Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge.

Make a Lavender Nosegay

Thursday 19 August, 1.00pm-4.00pm at Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge.

Archery Day at the Hunting Lodge

Sunday 22 August, 11.00am-4.00pm at Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge.

Discover the Beauty of Epping Forest

Saturday 28 August, 9.30am-4.30pm. A guided circular walk of approximately 8 miles led by Forest Keeper Ian Kolade. Meet in the summer car park opposite Hitchcock pub, Whipps Cross Road, E11 (GR 395 885)

Forest Festival

Sunday 5 September 11.00am - 4.00pm On Chingford Plain. Come and visit this event to learn about the Forest's history and wildlife. Stalls, displays and activities.

Family Autumn Stroll

Sunday 12 September, 10.30am-12.30pm. A guided walk starting from the Information Centre at High Beach, suitable for all the family. Enjoy a warming cup of soup at the end. Cost £1.00.

Open House Weekend at The Temple, Wanstead Park

Saturday 18 and 19 September, 11.00am - 5.00pm. A rare chance to see a fascinating copies of letters, cartoons and documents relating to the tragic early 19th century love story that resulted in the demolition of Wanstead House.

Wild Food Walk

Sunday, 26 September, 2.00pm-4.00pm. A guided walk with the Forest Keepers. Discover what the Forest has to offer this autumn. Meet at the end of Ferndale Road. (GR 398 870).

Please note all finish times for events are approximate. Facilities for disabled people: please check beforehand.

Unless otherwise stated, booking is not required, just turn up! Wear strong stout footwear for outdoor activities.

Please note that children should be accompanied by an adult on all events.

For further information:
'phone 020 8508 0028

FofEF NEWSLETTER BY E-MAIL

All new members who supply an e-mail address are initially sent a printed Newsletter and Membership Card.

The membership secretary then sends a test message to verify your e-mail address and provide information, on how obtain *Adobe Acrobat Reader* (required to 'read' the Newsletter) and the problems encountered with "hotmail". If any member who has requested their Newsletter by e-mail and finds it subsequently arrives by other methods, please contact "seymour@moss40.freeserve.co.uk" giving their name and address and e-mail address.

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

Please send your request by e-mail to ensure we get your correct address.

FRIENDS OF EPPING FOREST ANNUAL REPORT 2003-4

given at the AGM on 26th April 2004

I always assume that the purpose of the Chairman's Report is not just to list the various issues and activities with which we have been involved during the last year – (you will know the details of many of those from our Newsletter reports) – but to bring their importance into focus.

The most serious 'event' since I reported to you at this time last year is the threatened (Stansted driven) development of the 'M11 corridor' and the related development of Harlow southwards to the Forest.

You will have read in the local press of the colossal housing targets set by the Government's regional planning body responding to the Government's demands for vast increases in house building in the South-east & Essex generally.

Although containing some representatives of elected councils among the planners and development contractors... this is really a non-elected government appointed planning body that has the grand title of The East of England Regional Assembly (EERA)... and this is the organisation that accepted the proposed housing targets in the Draft Reports produced by its consultants.

In those Reports Epping Forest District has been allocated a target of 18,600 additional houses. At the moment the district contains 51,000 houses - an increase of more than a third! This is more than that proposed for any other district in Essex!

Then, to everyone's utter astonishment, the Deputy Prime Minister's mouthpiece, a body called 'Go-East', when commenting upon the reports, told the Regional Assembly that its targets were not large enough and they should be revised upwards!

Furthermore the local planning authorities - the district and county councils - were led to believe that should they not accept the targets, their planning powers would be taken from them and given to an 'Urban Development Corporation'... especially set up to do the job.

These planning reports do not discuss or explain in any detail the huge infra-structural implications, the roads, the industry, the schools, the hospitals, or even where all the necessary water supplies are to come from! That alone is a major problem!

Some members may ask... shouldn't we just be concerned with Epping Forest?

Since the Epping Forest Act was passed to protect the Forest in 1878, it has become a green island almost surrounded by urban development. To prevent that urban development spreading around London... and in our area, from completely engulfing the Forest by a coalescence or merging of those developments... the Metropolitan Green Belt was established some fifty years ago to provide a protective circle.

We believe there is much confusion in how the Green Belt is perceived. It is not primarily to provide or maintain 'green' areas or 'parks' as such, but is a well proven and long established planning principle to prevent the spread of development continuing outwards by maintaining a band of open countryside around London.

That may superficially appear to be the same thing – but it is not!... there may appear to be only a subtle difference of intention – but it is an extremely crucial difference!

In these current proposals it is mostly the Green Belt land that is going to be under attack and in our area we believe the Green Belt is vital for the protection of Epping Forest and its surroundings.

We have been assured that the Forest should be retained "*in its relatively undisturbed open countryside setting*"... being "*one of the most protected areas in England*"

That is Mr Prescott writing in answer to our objections! (sent on to him by Ian Duncan-Smith & Eleanor Laing). He goes on to give an assurance that "*the Government would not accept any development proposals that threaten the conservation value of the Forest*"... fine! But that paragraph is followed by... "*However the conservation and enhancement of the Forest's setting should not be confused with the identification of suitable locations to meet the region's development needs that are well away from the Forest and where development would not impact on its conservation.*"

But where in Epping Forest District can we increase the housing stock by one third without impacting upon Epping Forest's 'green' surroundings? (...like North Weald Aerodrome that adjoins the Lower Forest?)

Mr Prescott goes on to say, it is not for the Government to answer that conundrum... that problem is a job for the Regional planners and the local authorities to solve!

Of course, the key point in all this is the assumption of a necessity to meet the region's (alleged) development needs... that are never justified!

That is why we see the issues involved as of major concern to the Friends of Epping Forest and all who value the Forest.

We strongly believe that tactically the Green Belt principle should be considered 'the Rubicon', 'not-to-be-crossed' in this current battle to defend the Forest and its surrounding rural areas.

You will have read all this in much more detail in Harry's report in the Spring Newsletter (and this July newsletter)... indeed Harry has undertaken the bulk of the work in the form of letters and representations written on your behalf. We have written to Ministers, all the local MP's, the various 'consultative' bodies that required comments, and, we have copied this correspondence to the Epping Forest Conservators, the District Council and bodies to which we are associated such as the CPRE and London Green Belt Council.

Of course, many other local organisations, the District Council and the Superintendent & the Conservators themselves have all been involved in similar strong objections and representations.

The present position is that a 'Regional Spatial Strategy' (RSS) for East of England is currently being drafted. This will be available for public consultation in September 2004.

We have also been discussing road & traffic calming in the Forest area with the Superintendent and also with the County Highways and Traffic Officers - this latter meeting was arranged by our member David Linnell who is a Loughton Resident's Association County Councillor.

Some of the results of this and other discussions with the Superintendent are a promised extension of speed restrictions on Rangers Road and the Epping New Road between the Warren and the Wake Arms roundabout, improvements to the junction between those two roads, and, in the case of the Epping New Road, new road markings. You will have noticed these no doubt – they include a cycle-lane & central-'island markings' to keep traffic in single lanes in each direction. We would be interested to hear your views about those markings.

We have strongly supported the Superintendent's efforts to establish an overall traffic strategy for the Forest area.

But, all the Superintendent's efforts, in conjunction with Essex County Council will be virtually wrecked by the transport implications of the vast development proposals, should they go through.

Last year the Conservators applied for a grant for consultants to assist in their application to the Heritage Lottery Fund to support the development of an 'Interpretation Strategy' for the Forest: a strategy to increase public appreciation, knowledge, understanding and sympathetic feeling towards the Forest and care for its future.

The Consultants approached us for our views & role and general suggestions. Over half of our Committee were able to attend a meeting with the consultant. A very positive presentation was made of our activities and role in relation to the Forest. Among the main points that emerged from the discussion was firstly the need to improve and extend the public image of the Forest. It was realised that much of our own influence and activities were interpretative in nature... for instance our walks and newsletters etc. but that our involvement and that of other local voluntary bodies could be widened and increased.

It was thought that the strategy should be one of involving others not just the Conservators own interpretation. It was felt that the members of present voluntary organisations were, shall we say, 'not getting younger' and thought should be

given to those who must take over in the decades ahead!

Detailed ideas were put forward and we expressed a readiness to become more involved... we welcomed the initiative, and hope that we can play a useful part in the development and implementation of the plan-cum-strategy.

There have been numerous other issues that have involved us over the year. For example: the closure or provision of new Forest car parks, particularly those that provide access to Copped Hall and the Buffer-land and its footpaths.

We have objected to various planning applications, such as development of the Brickfields site adjoining the Lower Forest at Epping.

And, we have discussed many other issues with the Superintendent and the Verderers

During the year, most of these matters have been reported to you in one form or another in the Newsletters.

Perhaps one item of interest should be reported – the bird feeding station that we provided at the Forest Information Centre continues to be increasingly popular with visitors, both humans and birds. Siskins and Nuthatches being the most exciting of the regular avian visitors... Why not go and have a look.

Of course, our regular activities have continued – Newsletters have been

produced and distributed, walks organised, fetes & fairs attended, representation on various bodies or attendance at Committee meetings, including that of the Epping Forest & O S Cttee. at Guildhall, and, as usual a successful 'Forest Supper'.... many members have faithfully and voluntarily undertaken this 'background' work and we must thank them for that.

I must also thank the Officers and Committee members on your behalf for their work during the year... including our Treasurer... upon whose field I wish to trespass - once again - to emphasise a point. You will hear from his Report in a few minutes of the satisfactory state of our finances. However, I wish to remind you to bear in mind when considering our finances that our Committee feels a large healthy bank balance is important to maintain as a reserve for use should we need legal advice or representation at a Public Inquiry... this has happened in the past. Meanwhile it produces a small income that assists us to keep our subscriptions as low as possible. A low subscription is helpful to keep our membership large, because, obviously it is the size of our membership that provides the weight behind any letters we may write in your name.

I must not invade upon 'finances' any further... so that concludes my Report for 2003/4.

Ken Hoy, Chairman

CURRENT FRIENDS OF EPPING FOREST COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Judy Adams	Loughton	020 8418 0730	Jim Gimson	S. Woodford	020 8989 3282
Peggy Bitten (Sec.)	Chingford	020 8529 8594	Ken Hoy (Chairman)	High Easter	012 4523 1839
Harry Bitten	Chingford	020 8529 8594	Robert Levene	Snaresbrook	020 8989 0884
Gareth Browne	Highams Park	020 8527 1601	Sue McKinley (Dep.-Chair)	Upshire	019 9271 2014
Irene Buchan	Chingford	020 8529 6423	Derek Meakin	Chigwell	020 8500 1571
Alan Curran	Buckhurst Hill	020 8504 8720	Seymour Moss (Memb. Sec.)	Chingford	020 8529 0620
Bill Dexter	Chingford	020 8529 1427	Peter Read	Chingford	020 8524 1659
Robin Gaine	Chingford	020 8529 8890	Tony Sheppard (Treas.)	Woodford Grm	020 8504 8288

ITEMS FOR SALE

Our stock of sale items will be on sale at stalls throughout the summer (see dates for your diary).

Mugs	£4	Fleeces	from £15
Pens	50p - £1	Sweat Shirts	from £15
Greetings Cards £2.50 (pack of 5 (L) or 8 (S))		Caps	£5
Tree Poster	£1	Tea Towels	£3
Torch Key Rings	£2	Epping Forest Maps	£1.50
Fridge Magnets	£2	Books:	
Metal Lapel Badges	£2	Getting to Know Epping Forest	£6.95
Spy Scopes (Monocular)	£3.50	Short Walks in Epping Forest	£2.40