



FofEF web-site - [www.friendsofepppingforest.org.uk](http://www.friendsofepppingforest.org.uk)

SUMMER 2006

## Dear Friend,

The FofEF welcome the new Superintendent.

The City of London has appointed Mat Roberts as the new Superintendent of Epping Forest.

He took up the post on 8 June 2006. The position was previously held by Jeremy Wisenfeld, who sadly died in December 2005.

Mat Roberts will join Epping Forest from Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park where he served as the Warden Services Manager. He has worked at Loch Lomond since 2001, when he joined to help establish Scotland's first National Park. Before that, Mat lived in Wales for ten years where he worked as Chief Ranger for The Gower AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) and in countryside access for West Glamorgan County Council.

In his role as Superintendent, Mat will be responsible for the management and conservation of the 8,000 acres of Epping Forest and its buffer land, the largest public open space in the vicinity of London.

Jennifer Adams, the Director of the City of London's Open Spaces depart-

ment, said: "Mat will be great asset to Epping Forest, and I am very pleased that he is joining the team. He brings a vast array of experience to the role and I am sure he will build on the excellent work already carried out at the Forest."

Mat Roberts added: "I am delighted to take up the post of Superintendent.



*Mat Roberts  
new Superintendent of Epping Forest*

Epping Forest will be a fascinating and challenging environment and I look forward to continue the excellent work of managing and protecting this important open space."

We wish him many happy years in Epping Forest

## CENTENARY WALK - DON'T MISS IT!

The Epping Forest Centenary Walk from Manor Park to Epping will this year take place on 24 September celebrating once again the passing of the Epping Forest Act 1978. After 21 years leadership of the walk, Harry Bitten has decided to take a well earned breather. He has, however, ensured that you will be in safe hands in passing on the reins to Mike Whiteley, Secretary of the West Essex Ramblers.

The walk will start at the junction of Forest Drive and Capel Road, near Manor Park Station at 9 o'clock and should reach the centre of the Green Man Roundabout, Leytonstone around 9.45 am. We then expect to reach the County Hotel, Woodford at 10.45 am and the Warren Pond Car Park, Chingford at midday. Lunch will be taken at the Robin Hood PH between 1.15 pm and 2.00 pm. The walk should finish at Bell Common, Epping around 5.30 pm. The walk is, of course, open to everyone. It can, as usual, be joined or left at any point during the day and there will be pauses during the walk for short talks on Forest management, history and wildlife.

Hope you can join us on 24 September to celebrate our Forest. If you need any further information, phone Mike Whiteley on 0208 524 2737.

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## THE NATURAL ASPECT

Although I write in early June, this Newsletter will be read in July and I know that by then the brambles will be in full bloom. In all the sunny forest clearings and around the edges of the plains their white and sometimes pink flowers will within a few weeks become shining blackberries. Now however, in July, these blossoms are a rich source of nectar and pollen for a great variety of insects. On a walk this month the sunny patches of undergrowth will be literally buzzing with life; well worthy of stopping to take a second look.

Perhaps it will be the butterflies that catch your eye first. Most common will be the Meadow Brown. When open the wings of the females have orange on the forewing and a black 'eyespot'. The males will be entirely dark and the eyespot just visible, the underside of both sexes is pale buff and orange – with an 'eyespot'. You will also see the Gatekeeper or Hedge Brown. This butterfly is slightly smaller and the underside is similar when the wings are closed, but it has much more orange on all four wings when they are open. If you are lucky you may see the Speckled Wood butterfly. This species returned to the Forest in the early 1980's after an absence of over a hundred years. It is darkish brown with cream markings. However there are two or three other butterflies that you may not at first recognise as butterflies. They are the Skippers. The species you are likely to see darting about and 'skipping' from flower to flower are small tawny-orange insects. Not behaving as you may expect butterflies to behave.



*Speckled Wood: Also a woodland insect that will defend a sunny area of territory from others of the same species. Photo: Ken Hoy*

Three species are the most common. The Large Skipper, the Small Skipper and the almost identical Essex Skipper.

Apart from the 'Whites', of all the butterflies, these the ones I have mentioned, are the ones you are most likely to see feeding on the nectar of the bramble flowers.



*Large Skipper : This species has light speckling on the wings, unlike the other two Skippers you may see. Note the way its wings are held when at rest.*

*Photo: Ken Hoy*

The big furry Bumblebees that you see will be of several species. There will be those with white or buff tips to their abdomens and others with reddish or chestnut 'tails'. There will be different species with different combinations of yellows, browns and black bands and they will be of different sizes.

There may also be Honeybees, although because disease has affected them, they are now more scarce than they once were. If you are unsure of the difference – Honeybees are almost wasp size but more hairy than the common wasp, and, not striped in warning yellow and black but in more subtle yellows and shades of brown. The amounts of yellow or brown vary greatly.

Some of these Honeybees are not necessarily from beekeepers' domestic hives in gardens or allotments but are occasionally wild honeybees that have colonised holes in hollow forest trees. The Honeybee is obviously so named because it stores honey – not for our use but as food to enable the colony to survive the winter. Thus descendants of a swarm of bees that 'went wild' and took over a tree hole will often be using that hole year after year and once this was not an uncommon sight in the Forest (before disease hit Honey bees). The Bumblebee colony does not store honey and does not survive the winter. Only the new queens of the colony, who have already mated, hibernate and survive to the following spring. The old queen, the males and workers die.

It is the new fertile queens, emerging from hibernation, that are the very large Bumblebees that can be seen on warm days in early spring hovering about the grass and herbage as they look for a suitable hole to use as a nest site for the coming year. Not infrequently the nest of a vole or Wood Mouse is commandeered. One presumes it was already deserted!?

If you look closely at the bees moving from flower to flower there are several interesting points to notice.

Incidentally bees will not usually sting unless they or their nests or hives are molested, so have a close look. You should see the bee's long black tongue probing down into the flower for the sweet nectar. This is food for the adult bees – regurgitated when the bee returns to the nest.

You should also see the pollen that is collected in special sacs – the yellow blobs on the hind legs of the foraging bee - and taken to the nest to feed the larvae. In a new nest, a large lump of pollen is where the new queen lays her first eggs that become the first 'workers'. Some of these workers (females that do not normally lay eggs) undertake nest duties, building, repairing and cleaning the nest, whilst other workers forage to provide food – nectar and pollen – for the adults and larvae in the nest.

Clearly both Bumblebees and Honeybees are 'social insects' with highly organised and complicated life cycles.

And, there are species of Cuckoo bees – difficult to distinguish because they look like, and, in order to deceive, need to look like the Bumblebees upon whom they are parasitic. The queen is big and steals into her host's nest and kills the resident queen. The cuckoo queen then lays her own eggs and fools the resident workers into feeding and rearing her offspring. Her eggs will provide just males, but eventually she produces offspring that become new queens - she produces no workers having 'hi-jacked' the others!



*Mining Bee: Quite a common species creating its tunnels on patches of bare soil in the Forest*

*Photo: Ken Hoy*

Some of the smaller bees may be 'solitary' bees, of which there are many species. Some are Mining bees, of which there are several kinds. One of which commonly occurs in the Forest and produces the miniature volcano-shaped sandy mounds that are usually quite conspicuous as the freshly excavated soil is a different colour from that of the bare surface. If you stand quietly to one side for a few moments, you may see the ginger haired bee emerge from the vertical tunnel, having laid two or three eggs in side-chambers

that she seals with pollen – the food supply for the larvae when they hatch.

Among the smaller insects are the yellow and black or brown and black striped hoverflies. Being flies and not wasps these are quite harmless and have evolved to look like wasps or bumblebees – to mimic them – and thereby gain some protection from potential predators – where the predator has had an unpleasant experience when attacking a 'real' wasp or bee.



*Hoverfly: One of the largest and most striking of the hoverflies.*  
Photo: Ken Hoy

In most cases the adult hoverfly maintains itself by feeding on nectar – from the bramble flowers. But in many species their tiny slug-like larvae are voracious carnivores feeding upon aphids – green & black fly.

Keep still in a shady spot and watch the adult fly hover in a shaft of sunlight. These are usually males defending a territory. Their wings are a blur as they hover and yet their body is completely motionless – then in a flash they have gone, up, down, forward, backward or sideways. Then equally suddenly reappearing in exactly the same spot.

There are many different species. Some are migratory, often in almost plague numbers in late summer. Many have interesting life cycles; some, where the larvae are parasitic in ant nests, feeding on debris, others eating the ant larvae. The larvae of several large hoverflies hatch from eggs laid by the female in the nests of common wasps and bumble bees. Many larvae are scavengers feeding on the debris in the bottom of the nest. But, the larva of another hoverfly that gets into wasp nests, attaching itself near the waist of the adult wasp, where it cannot be stung, whilst it consumes the contents of the wasp's abdomen!

There is one large wasp that you may be fortunate enough to see - the Hornet. This is a strong flying insect that is mostly brown and yellow rather than the black and yellow of the common wasp and in flight this yellow is quite



*Hornet: this large wasp is not as aggressive as its reputation*  
Photo: Ken Hoy

noticeable covering most of the rear part of their abdomen. They seem to have become more numerous recently. They have a frightening reputation that they do not deserve. Although they can sting, they are usually less aggressive than the other wasps. Recently a Queen has been investigating the small gaps in my roof. They are carnivores, predatory upon other insects, although they do also feed on ripe fruit. I once watched a Hornet chasing a Meadow Brown butterfly. Once caught the butterfly's wings were snipped off and the carcass carried away to the Hornet's nest to feed the larvae.

If we just stop and look it becomes obvious that the undergrowth of brambles is a vital and rich resource in the complicated life of the Forest's woodland.

As film-maker John Grierson used to say, and now the 'Grumpy Old Men' say... "What a Wonderful World"!

**Ken Hoy**

## ACTIVITIES AT THE TEMPLE

During the summer, the Conservators are planning a series of weekend family events at the Temple in Wanstead Park to encourage people to find out about this fascinating area of the Forest. These are 8 - 9 July, 5 - 6 August and 30 September and 1 October, when the building will be open 1 - 5pm. There will be a Roman theme for the weekend 5 - 6 August when visitors can see some artefacts from the elusive Roman site and create a 'Roman' souvenir. This event is supported by the Wanstead Parklands Community Group.

The Temple will also be open during the London Open House Weekend 16 -17 September from 11am to 5pm when the theme will be the history of the Park.

## CLARE'S WALK

Suntrap Forest Education Centre was a splendid venue for an evening performance of Steve Waters' new play *Clare's Walk: a journey from London to the Fens in search of the poet John Clare* on 22 March. As a local member of the John Clare Society I have become very familiar with his life and poetry over the years. It was thrilling to sit back and watch a contemporary re-working of the poet's journey out of Essex in 1841 when he walked home to Northamptonshire, having dis-charged himself from Dr. Allen's asylum at High Beach. Last summer Steve Waters and Patrick Morris, who took the role of Clare, followed the route Clare noted in his journal, though by their own admission, this took 6 days and they ate in pubs! Clare took three days, scarcely ate at all and was unable to recognise his family on arrival. It was not long before he was committed to Northampton Asylum for the rest of his life but his legacy of some of the loveliest nature poems ever written lives on.



Waters' one-man play revealed some of the characters he and Morris met on the way as they 'sought to view the landscape of the present through the lens of the past'. Contemporary issues concerning traffic pollution and motorways remind us of Clare's anger and bewilderment at the Enclosures that took away the countryside where he had once roamed free.

The play was a tour de force and deserves a much wider audience locally in years to come. But Suntrap was a fitting venue as it began its tour through areas associated with Clare's journey. After convivial refreshments downstairs we took our seats upstairs in a double circle around the long classroom, tables pushed aside. In recalling all the children I had brought from Walthamstow to study here years ago, my mind went back further to imagine the poet at Fairmead House, part of the asylum that once stood on this very spot, wandering the forest nearby and writing about it so eloquently. Clare was with us in spirit, I am sure.

**Penny Freeston**

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## THE WARREN HOUSE



Located on the side of Warren Hill and commanding a panoramic view across Fairmead Plain towards the heights of High Beach stands the Warren House, which is a 500 year old grade II\* listed building. Today it is an elegant, white, part stucco and part weatherboarded house, but hidden within its central core is a timber frame which may be contemporary with the Hunting Lodge at Chingford. Our current understanding of how hunting forests were managed and operated is incomplete, but standings like the Hunting Lodge were used to view the hunt, whereas structures like the one within Warren House may have been occupied by those keepers who were tasked with caring for the deer. Perhaps this building was used to store nets and other equipment, but it provided a good vantage point for maintaining a watchful eye across this part of the Forest.

As the Crown's interest in hunting diminished, the establishment of a thriving rabbit warren around the building provided a regular supply of meat and fur. An estate map of 1739 shows that the Warren enclosure was just over eight acres, but gives no details of any buildings. However eight years later, it was being used as an inn, The Rayne Deer. This hostelry became very popular especially in the summer months and was noted for its rabbit pies. Side wings incorporated the original timber structure and a sizeable cellar was dug beneath the west wing to house the beer, ale, wine and other liquors. A number of stables and other buildings were constructed around the inn. At one point it became a retirement home for actors. It was improved by

Humphrey Repton in the early years of the nineteenth century when it was converted to a private residence. Attempts were made to exclude rabbits from the garden which still retains evidence of Repton's designs.

The Warren House was acquired by the City of London in 1876 and the house became the official residence of successive Superintendents for 120 years.

The Conservators are keen to use this recently refurbished building for meetings, exhibitions and displays about the history of the Forest. It will be open during Open House Weekend on Sunday 17 September for guided tours, places on which must be pre-booked on 020 8508 0028.

If you are interested in reading more about this building then why not buy a copy of **The Warren House, Loughton, Essex.** by Richard Morris and Tricia Moxey, which is available from the Visitor Centre £2.95. + p. & p.

### Warren House Open Day

The refurbishment of the Warren is almost complete and the Conservators are very keen to hear members views on how the House could be used in the future. In order to facilitate ideas and discussion they have arranged a series of open sessions where representatives of clubs, organisations and societies are invited to come along to have a look round the house to see its potential and contribute ideas. The final date is Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> July 2pm-4pm.

You are welcome to call in at any time during this session but it would be

helpful if you could let Christine Turner know at the Warren Office (020 8532 1010) if you are planning to come. Warren House is located adjacent to the headquarters at the Warren yard, just off of the Epping New Road (A 104) between Rangers Road and the Robin Hood Roundabout. Right turns into the Warren yard are dangerous and they advise all visitors traveling north to go up to the roundabout and come back down the Epping New Road to enter from the left. Once on the site just follow the signs. Alternatively the number 20 bus passes the bottom of Warren Hill along Loughton High Road. Walk up Warren Hill and along the drive to Warren House.

## KEEPING THE LITTLE GREY CELLS ACTIVE

The Friends arrange a series of guided walks in various parts of the Forest. The leaders provide some information about the trees, culture, history, management and natural history, and we hope, whet your appetite to learn more! We are fortunate that there is an excellent range of natural history courses provided by the Epping Forest Field Centre, (please phone 020 8508 7714 for a brochure), but there are other organisations which have programmes designed to engage the grey cells. There are two branches of the WEA covering the Forest area and details of their autumn programme (which include courses on the local ecology) can be obtained from libraries.

The Copped Hall Trust has arranged several study days and concerts in addition to the regular Sunday Tours of the mansion and gardens. The contact phone number is 01992 571 657.

For many years, the Buckhurst Hill Community Association has run a programme of walks exploring the Forest and this is an excellent way of combining both physical and mental activities. For details of these and a wide range of other courses please phone 020 8504 6668.

Epping Forest District Museum in Sun Street, Waltham Abbey has a varied programme of exhibitions. Currently **Hay Sweeps and Horse Hoes** highlights the importance of farming in the local area and contains not just some innovative machinery made by Cottis of Epping, but also includes a film of hay making in Ongar in the 1940's. For details of opening times please phone 01992 716882.

## CATTLE GRAZING UPDATE

At their meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> May the Epping Forest and Commons Committee considered documents summing up the response to the recent public consultation on cattle grazing and making consequent recommendations on what is described as the draft Grazing Rationale and Strategy.

In the Friends' response to the Public Consultation we recorded our views that the document failed to put the issues fairly before the public. Similarly, the summing up leaves us with a feeling of misrepresentation. Thus, the Consultation resulted in 579 responses, 504 of whom were in favour of re-establishing grazing over further areas. The Friends' response, detailing the problems such a course would present, and representing the views of an organisation with nearly 2000 members, was counted as one response! Specifically the draft strategy proposes, in short, that:

Over the next 20-30 years grazing should be planned for certain key areas of the Forest.

The re-introduction of grazing is phased by tackling a number of discrete areas at a time.

Six identified areas are considered for extending the grazing in Phase 1 covering the period 2006-2012.

The full range of control measures, including wooden fencing, be considered for the grazed areas and that details of proposals and options (if possible (sic)) for these are brought before the Committee for decision for each area in turn.

That funding is sought for the project from external funders and partners, including the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and Essex County Council (Highways).

Further public consultation is undertaken on the detailed grazing and control proposals for each area in turn.

Phase 1 (2000 – 2012) would focus on six areas:

1. Barn Hoppitt/Chingford – Fairmead – Honey Lane Quarters. Effectively from Whitehall Road to Wooderdon Hill, 700 hectares.
2. Fernhills/Trueloves
3. Long Running and Sunshine Plain
4. Sheppards Meadows (east of Bell Common, Epping)

5. Wanstead Flats (small areas of acid grassland)

6. Wanstead Park (small areas of acid grassland)

It is proposed that the Grazing Strategy should be included within a comprehensive bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund, which includes funding for, improvement of visitor facilities including signage, 'gateway' provision, new and improved tea huts, interpretive panels, easy access trails, improvements to car parks, conversion of Coach House/Stables for use in association with Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge – retail, reception and education, Community Liaison Post to attract current non-users to Forest, structured educational programme to 5<sup>th</sup> Year pupils in 20 local schools.

Various other aspects of Heritage features are included within a total bid of £3,305,000, which includes an indicative cost of £780,000 for grazing element.

The Committee was invited to approve these proposals. However, particularly the Verderers present thought that what was before them in terms of Grazing Strategy was so fundamental and far reaching and would dramatically alter the appearance of the Forest, that they argued that grazing should be given detailed examination and consideration separately from the other elements of the HLF bid.

However, during discussion it was said that there were organisational reasons why it was desirable for the full bid to be put forward on a provisional basis.

It was, therefore, agreed that the draft Grazing Rationale and Strategy should be included in the HLF bid and that meantime it should be referred to a sub-committee for consideration.

We await notification as to when this sub-committee will meet.

**Harry Bitten**

### Cattle Grazing Stop Press.

The above was written prior to our becoming aware of a letter dated 19<sup>th</sup> June from the superintendent of Epping Forest in which it is stated "that the Grazing Management Strategy has been adopted by the Conservators subject to identifying and agreeing with further public consultation the detail of *how grazing will be expanded and restored to specific areas of the forest.*"

Those present in the public gallery at the relevant Conservator's meeting

in May understood from what was said there that because of the far reaching nature of the proposals contained in the Grazing Management Strategy that it was not appropriate for consideration and decision at a general meeting and should be referred to a sub-committee. This was accepted. Then because the Strategy formed part of a general bid for HLF funding the meeting agreed that it should go forward subject to the findings and recommendation of the sub-committee being accepted.

The letter under discussion appears to have been sent to those who responded to the Grazing Consultation exercise but not as far as we are aware to those who responded by e-mail. These latter were all wiped out by the City and therefore appear to have not been included in the figures of pros and cons. We are certainly aware of people who responded electronically and were opposed to fencing and therefore grazing.

At our AGM the Chairman's Report expressed our attitude towards this matter which we had sought to spell out in a succession of Newsletters and this was passed unanimously.

It is worth recording that the EFRA in their response also indicated misgivings about grazing and the consequent need for wholesale fencing of the Forest.

In our opposition to the fencing of the Forest and to the proposal to extend a woodland pasture regime throughout the Forest, we have hoped— in the light of our full explanation of our views in Newsletters— that we have fairly represented the views of our membership.

We have taken the opportunity of informal contact with members at our walks and at stalls to reassure ourselves in these matters and the response has been that "if we disagreed we would tell you".

We hope that we can assume that in respect of fencing, woodpasture and grazing that our membership is behind us. If not, please let us know.

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## ASHDOWN FOREST

Comparison of Ashdown Forest with Epping Forest is sometimes made - as they are of similar size, have a somewhat similar history and apparently have to contend with similar problems. However although there are some similarities the differences are far greater.

Ashdown Forest in East Sussex is some 44 miles or 70 k, from central London. Like Epping it is an ancient forest. But it had a round shape that totalled 13391 acres or 5420 hectares until 1693 when a large block in the centre, almost half, was enclosed and passed into private ownership - the common rights being extinguished with little or no public access. Apart from small enclosures this major central area became Pippingford Park, home of the Lord of the Manor. The ownership of the remaining Forest, 6400 acres, (2590 hectares) outside the Park, also remained with the Lord of the Manor - although here the rights of common were retained.

Ashdown had 'a Tom Willingale' too ... a John Miles whose common right to cut 'litter' - bracken, heather, grass etc. as bedding for animals, was 'banned' in 1876 by the Lord of the Manor, Lord de la Warr. In the subsequent High Court battle in 1881 the Commoners lost, but three years later they succeeded in an appeal. In 1885 an Act of Parliament established a Board of Governors to oversee the Forest by-laws, including the protection of the rights of common ... whilst the ownership remained with Lord de la Warr

A century later, in 1988, with contributions and a public appeal, East Sussex County Council purchased the freehold of the Forest from the Lord of the Manor and established the Ashdown Forest Trust as owners of the Forest. A Board of Conservators with sixteen members supervises the management. Five members of the Board are elected by the 730 Commoners. A Superintendent and a team of Rangers undertake the day-to-day running of the Forest.

So to summarise the similarities, like Epping Forest, Ashdown had hunting rights, common grazing and pannage rights, rights to cut litter, peat and turf and wood or fuel rights - rights of Estovers. It is an ancient forest, modified by human action over hundreds of years. It also had a conflict in the 1870's over those common rights and they were protected finally by an Act of Parliament. It is now a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and



*Ashdown Forest*

hopes to receive further European recognition.

But, although similar in size, the pressure of the much smaller population using it is far less. Obviously this is a major difference!

Geographically and physically it is also different. Its highest point is 751 ft. or 223 m. Geologically it consists mainly of sandstone, shales and some clay, limestone and ironstone... consequently much of it is heathland - heather (770 hectares or 1900 acres) and large areas of bracken and grass (600 hectares or 1480 acres), and, wet acid bogs.



*Ashdown Forest Visitor Centre*

Ashdown has much less woodland than Epping Forest. What woodland there is, is relatively young as most of the trees were cut down before the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century to fuel the thriving Weald iron smelting industry. This was

based on hundreds of small furnaces using charcoal, while the Forest's streams were dammed to supply water-power to drive the bellows and forge hammers. A major product was the casting of cannons during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century this petered out as the industry moved to the Midlands to use the cheaper coke from coal.

Open heathland covers most of the Forest and what high woodland that does exist today is mostly oak and birch, with in places, some Beech, Alder and Scots Pine..

The original Red Deer had vanished by 1700 and today there are some 1000 Fallow Deer with a few Muntjac and a small number of Roe and Sika Deer.

Road casualties of mostly the Fallow Deer average about 100 kills p.a., 10%. Epping Forest in the 1960's with only some 70 fallow deer was losing almost 20% p.a. as road casualties!

As far as birds are concerned, Ashdown is beginning to suffer similar population reductions as Epping Forest. But since most of it is open heathland, it still has many of the heathland birds and some of the woodland birds that we once had here - 60 or more years ago. One that we have never had is the Dartford Warbler, but Ashdown still has some Nightjars, Stonechats, Redstarts and Wood Warblers - as once did Epping Forest\*.

Ashdown's management is controlled by the Ashdown Forest Act 1974. Management aims are rather similar - but worded differently:

"It shall be the duty of the Conservators to regulate and manage

the Forest as an amenity and place of resort subject to the existing rights of common"... and to protect "the Forest from encroachment and to conserve it as a quiet and natural area of outstanding beauty."

The Forest's management problems are similar too, but solutions are very different.

Grazing animals using the common rights of pasture were endangered by, and endangering traffic - consequently grazing, particularly sheep, ceased in 1985. Approval was sought under the Ashdown Forest Act.1974 to enclose and fence all the Forest. This suggestion of fencing to maintain the grazing, aroused a great conflict and controversy as it was strongly felt there was a "need to retain the characteristic landscape and its role in public recreation". However in spite of public opinion, 19% of the Forest was enclosed and some sheep and black welsh cattle grazed in the enclosed portion.

The large bracken areas are successfully controlled by mowing in rotation some 10% (60 hectares) each year. The mowing is carried out in June and then again in July. To maintain a mosaic of different aged heather the heathlands are also mown, but on 15 year cycles. To produce a commercial income some areas are coppiced, mostly stands of Sweet Chestnut, and other areas have been cleared leaving Oak standards for timber production.

Horse riding is allowed by permit only. To prevent damage to footpaths such riding is confined to tracks and fire-breaks.. Mountain bikes are not allowed at all.

The A22 and several other roads pass through the Forest where some 50 car parks provide views from the ridges over the open Forest landscape.

Ashdown Forest, like the New Forest is clearly very different from Epping Forest, but it has been selectively quoted to show its similarities. The major differences make comparison invalid. Where there are valid similarities and problems the solutions have not necessarily been the same. For instance, management is not entirely confined to grazing but mowing strategies are used.

As I said, there are some apparent similarities - but there are also major differences!

**Ken Hoy**

## STOP PRESS

A Nightjar and a Wood Warbler have been heard in Epping Forest this summer.

## GREY SQUIRRELS VERSUS SONG BIRDS



Evidence against the jolly little grey squirrel - introduced into Britain in the Victorian era - continues to pile up in terms of the extent of the damage they do to the song bird population!

We have covered this subject in the Newsletter several times recently as more and more information has emerged about the darker side of the squirrels' lifestyle.

Until fairly recently the continent which, as we all know, is cut off from Britain by the Channel, has escaped the grey menace, but now a population has emerged in Italy! How have they got there? Perhaps second home in Tuscany owning Brits have taken them there as pets!

A European Squirrel Eradication Plan has been developed to try to nip the problem in the bud, before these cheeky little beasts spread beyond Italy and face the rest of Europe with the same intractable problem that we have.

It is reported in the national media that a Charity, Songbird Survival, has commissioned a report authored by Professor Roy Brown of Birkbeck College, University of London. This suggests that out of an estimated natural population of 260 million of the main songbird species, 180 million adult birds or their eggs and young are killed by mammals every year, mostly by squirrels, domestic cats and rats.

I would suggest that quite a few of the remainder who escape the attention of the mammals are targeted by magpies. It all amounts to a pretty dangerous existence for the songbirds, many of which spend a lot of time and energy migrating here to sing for us.

There does seem to be a reduction in the song and small bird populations in the Forest over recent years. We have not seen a Tree creeper for years

and precious few Nuthatches. I can't believe that is entirely due to ageing eyesight.

I have no difficulty seeing squirrels. They are all over the place. I did hear a Nightingale recently along The Gas Ride from Lincoln's Lane car park (Fairmead crossing of A104) to the Warren. I understand that it has been there for the past three years in one of the bits of Nightingale project coppices.

On the other hand, in the Lea Valley Regional Park we listened to a succession of nightingales singing a few weeks ago. The Park has a lot less mature woodland than does the Forest and perhaps therefore many fewer squirrels. Does this account for the difference?

A further comparison! I remember the late Verderer, Bernard Ward, telling me that in the 1960s he and his wife walked one evening from Bury Road alongside Bury Wood towards Connaught Water and heard a succession of Nightingales singing all the way along. I think the number was eight! The woodland edge there doesn't look much different now than it looked then. It looks a good habitat so why the difference? How much is due to squirrel and magpie predation? How much due to conditions in Africa and Europe? It is difficult to believe that there are serious obstacles arising in Europe, they seem to have no shortage of Nightingales there! The answer! They have no grey squirrels and fewer Magpies!

Our native red squirrel, now hanging on in a few isolated spots in England is mainly, if not exclusively a vegetarian, and little threat to birds.

Eradication of the greys is clearly a difficult problem, but if the enormous

pressure on the small bird population is to be relieved it is something that ought to be tackled. It would help to preserve perhaps the red squirrel and hopefully lead to their return to their former homes.



The greys are bigger than our native reds and out-competes them for food, they also carry a virus which is harmless to them but deadly to the reds.

**Harry Bitten**

# EPHING FOREST – A UNIQUE WOODLAND ECOLOGY THROUGH THE AGES?

Pollen analysis is one of the main techniques available to us for understanding the type of vegetation and level of human activity within an area in the past. Within Epping Forest, the pollen profile from adjacent to Lodge Road, originally studied Baker, Moxey and Oxford in 1978, has provided just such an opportunity. They obtained four radiocarbon dates and suggested that this area has always been wooded. The woodland was originally dominated by lime, which changed to beech during the Anglo-Saxon period. The dating for the disappearance of lime dominated woodland during the Anglo-Saxon period is the latest occurrence of this event from lowland southern England, with similar events in the London area occurring during the Bronze Age, two thousand years earlier. Several authors have attributed this late event to be the result of the adoption of wood-pasture and woodland management within Epping Forest during the Anglo-Saxon period, prior to the formation of the legal

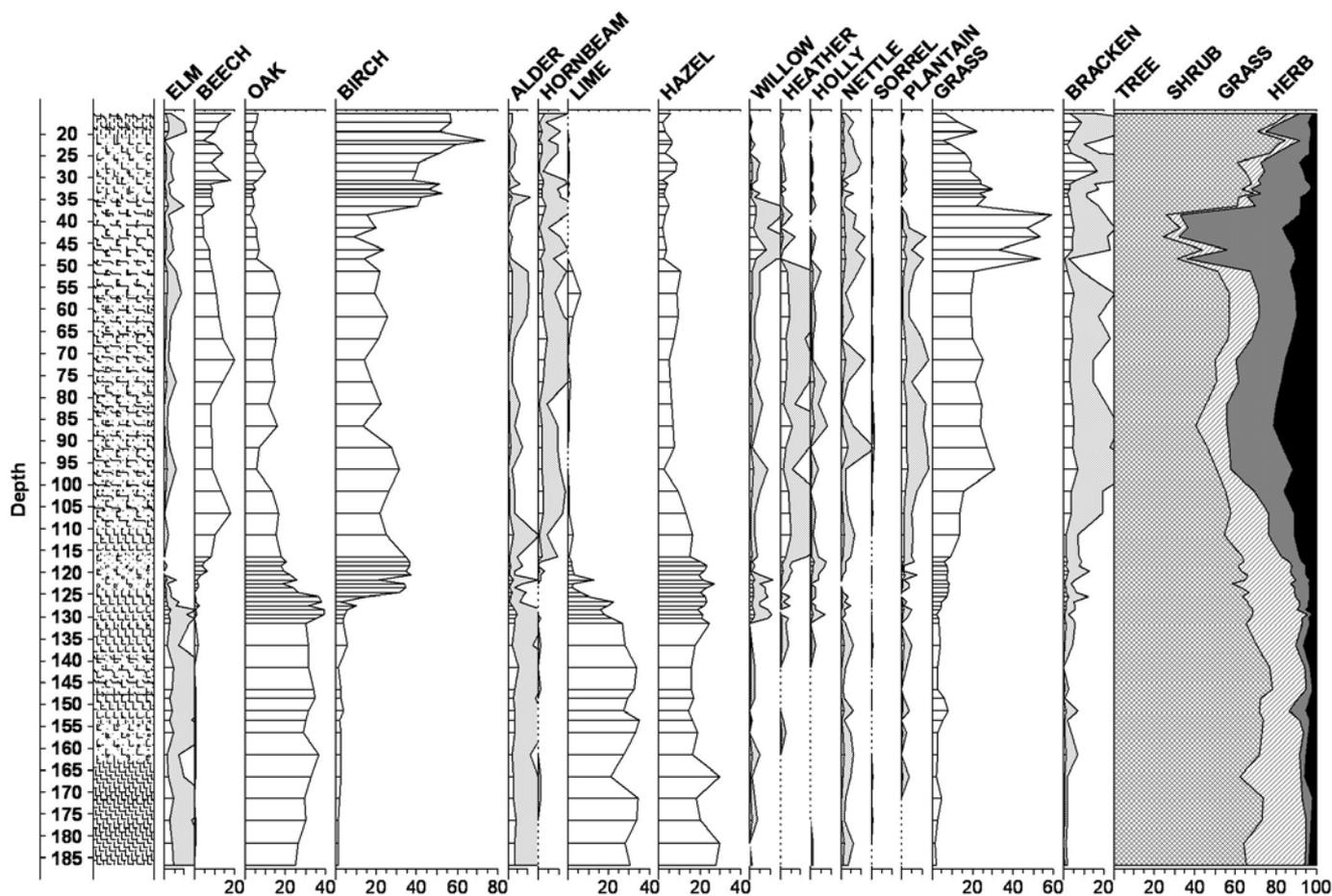
status of Royal Forest during the Norman period. These findings therefore make this area potentially very important as it is in contrast with much of what we understand from other pollen studies from across England.

Due to the late date for the decline of lime woodland from the Lodge Road sequence there have been several doubts raised over this original study since it was published, particularly relating to dating issues. Advances in radiocarbon dating since the original study now mean that much smaller samples of only a few seeds can now be dated with much greater precision than was available in the original study. Carefully selected samples (only a few seeds) can be easily dated, without the problem of not knowing their origin or fear of contamination by younger organic remains.

The decline in lime woodland at Lodge Road coincided with a large change in the bog vegetation. It

appeared that there was an erosion event in the past, indicated by an abundance of gravel particles within the sequence. This coincided with the transition from lime to beech woodland. This event also coincided with a change from the underlying clay and silt sediments to overlying organic remains associated with the bog vegetation. One probable explanation is that the clearance of the local woodland occurred at a much earlier date and caused an increase in local soil destabilisation and erosion. However, it was not until the construction of Lodge Road, probably during the Anglo-Saxon period, that the bog began to accumulate sediments continuously. By this time beech woodland had been long established. A new set of samples has been submitted for radiocarbon dating which should help to identify with greater certainty the date at which lime woodland disappeared from this area.

*Dr Michael Grant*



Summary pollen diagram from Lodge Road, Epping Forest (plotted against depth)  
Pollen taxa values plotted as a percentage of all taxa at each given depth (Shading indicated x5 exaggeration)

## GREEN BELT UNDER THREAT

I suppose that we generally take the Green Belt pretty much for granted and expect, once we get (drive, ride or even bike) beyond London's sprawl that we enter the COUNTRYSIDE!

Thus beyond Chingford, Loughton and Chigwell, or Barkingside and Havering, we come to attractive fields, hedgerows, scattered woodlands and even some small villages, all accessible by public footpaths, if you want to take access that far, which many people do, of course.

This Green Belt and all its visual and other blessings does not arrive by accident, it is a consequence of much public and Governmental concern over the spread of towns on the 1920s and 30s and so called 'ribbon' development along main radiating roads.

The Green Belt Circular issued by Duncan Sandys, Minister for Town and Country Planning in 1955, decreed that there should be created a wide band of protected open countryside, where beyond in-filling and rounding off of existing settlements, no further building would be permitted, except that related to agriculture and forestry.

Like all human (and Government) institutions, this legislation hasn't quite lived up to the publicity and, of course, the current East of England Plan now encourages massive destruction of the Green Belt, in our area, by building over North Weald Airfield and the expansion of Harlow. All of which is, of course, being strongly challenged.

Now, into this delicate area crashes the hitherto respected Adam Smith Institute with a Report on Land Economy. This document's main argument is that Britain's planning policy is out of date. It protects the countryside, much of which is not worth protecting, at the expense of development. Rather than buying food from our Farmers, we should support developing countries by buying food from them.

We could solve housing shortages by developing much of the land released from food production. Green Belt policies should be abandoned, and cities should be allowed to expand into extensively planted new woodlands around them.

In this way a million new homes could be created in ten years. Planning law would be replaced by an increased reliance on Protective Covenants and Nuisance Law (m'learned friends will be rubbing their hands!)

The most scenic land would be protected under private management, and conservation groups like RSPB and the National Trust, could buy up land they wished to protect.

The 'umbrella' group, the London Green Belt Council, to which we belong, has written to the Minister responsible - it was John Prescott, but is now Ruth Kelly - pouring scorn on the Report and seeking assurance that it will have no influence on Government policy, particularly Green Belt policy.

Criticism of the Adam Smith's Report's market led approach to planning arises from other bodies such as CPRE (Campaign to Protect Rural England) and RTIP (Royal Town Planning Institute). The RTPI often suggests that there should be some relaxation of the vigorous approach to Green Belt protection, but it could hardly be expected to support the abolition of the planning system itself!

The moral is, don't take anything for granted (but I'm sure you know that already!). There is always someone or somebody out there with a message for change whatever their motivation.

*Harry Bitten*

## THE FOOD CHAIN

Sometimes it is difficult to believe your eyes. It was early one morning in May as I passed the landing window and stopped because I noticed the beautiful orb web of a spider across the corner of the window. It wasn't there yesterday!

Just as I peered closely, inches from the glass, a fly suddenly became ensnared in the web - struggling. Seconds later a fine fat spider appeared from the corner of the window. With two or three hesitations it crossed the web and reached the fly. Within seconds the fly stopped struggling. The spider paused; then began to carefully turn the fly round and round wrapping it in a shroud of silk. After a few further moments the spider began to repair the torn web. I thought, I must look at the markings and try to identify this spider.

Then, in the blink of my disbelieving eyes, a Great Tit hovered for a split second right in front of my face.

The spider and the fly vanished, and so did the Great Tit. As I recovered and refocused my eyes I saw the Great Tit in the tree across the lawn. He approached his female partner who was quivering her wings, begging like a young bird. He duly presented his courting gift and flew off.

Although at this stage of their relationship, rather than 'courting' I

decided it was pair bonding! She gulped and swallowed, then sat there for some moments - I'm sure it was smugly, but maybe it was the digestive process. Then she flew across the garden and entered the nest box in the plum tree - presumably to resume sitting on her eggs! She didn't reappear.

Two, maybe three minutes, had passed since I first stopped, and now nothing moved except a faint quivering of the empty web in the breeze. It had all happened - right before my eyes.

How often do we get a chance to see the 'food-chain' demonstrated so dramatically?

I thought of the Burl Ives song about "the bird that ate the spider that ate the fly that got caught in the web .... etc"

*Ken Hoy*

## 50 FAVOURITE TREES



We all cherish trees, they are so important not just as landscape features or wildlife habitats, but they make us feel good as well! All round us are some very special trees, gnarled old veterans, yews in churchyards, hedgerow oaks, apple trees or commemorative trees on village greens. Epping Forest District Council has received a lottery grant to find your 50 favourite trees. Please search out and then nominate your favourite tree and say why it is so special. Photographs, verses, drawings or just your feelings about it are especially welcome. All nominations will be incorporated into a website [www.favouritetrees.org](http://www.favouritetrees.org) and the top 50 will be photographed for a display at the Epping Forest District Museum next year. For further details of Epping Forest Countryside phone 01992 788203 or e-mail: [countryside@eppingforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:countryside@eppingforestdc.gov.uk)

## THE NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK

Having an offspring in Southampton we pay fairly regular visits and invariably use these to go for a walk in the New Forest.

The New Forest, at 57,086 hectares (Epping Forest is about 2,500 hectares) has, of course, just been declared as the country's newest National Park, something that seems to be viewed with a certain amount of suspicion among some sections of the local populace!

The pre-existing management by the Verderers, Forestry Commission and Commoners, with some inputs by English Nature and Hampshire County Council, resulted, it is said, in the continuation and conservation of a beautiful area, so why change things?

The National Park authority insists that the new status will afford an additional level of protection for the Forest and that they will take all the views and concerns of user groups into account in their future planning and in the evolution of the (inevitable) management plan! Judging by some of the contrary views being expressed this will be quite a task.

One idea that has already been floated is to close some of the very many car parks so that particularly sensitive areas (eg where ground nesting birds are present) might become a little less readily accessible. There are indeed a great many car parks and no doubt each of them is a favourite walk or cycle starting point for someone! Could be trouble ahead!

We started our late May walk from Acres Down car park near Minstead, which was pretty full on our arrival. The possible explanation emerged as we walked along an attractive valley and encountered mobs of birders behind batteries of telescopes looking for Goshawks and Honey Buzzards that had evidently been reported in the area. However, once past this centre of excitement we entered the woodland around the Highland Water and hardly saw a soul (walking; there were a few cyclists) for the next four hours, but we did see fallow deer and a nice herd of red deer.

There are many woodland enclosures designed to keep grazing animals out, but something like 20,000 hectares are grazed by approximately 2,500 deer, 2750 ponies and 1750 cattle. Cattle seem by and large to stick to the open plains and heathland areas, while the ponies seem to turn up anywhere, including the roadside



verges. Deer being on the shy and secretive side are mostly in the woodland, at least during the daytime.

In many areas the soil is fairly poor and hence the fescue grasses do not grow rapidly, but even so some people say that the Forest is overgrazed, the many 'lawns' having a rather manicured look. I'm sure that the commoners who turn out cattle and ponies would not take that view!

There are vast areas of open plains and heathland and the woodlands are very varied in appearance, reflecting a long history of different types of management. Some of the woodlands look like, and indeed are, plantations with minimal understorey, while adjacent woodland plantations are full of shrubs and regrowth.

In past centuries the Forest was heavily used to supply timber for the Royal and Merchant Navies and so there is a bit of an absence of really big old trees, although, of course, there are some that have escaped the axe!

The main dual carriageway Ringwood road through the Forest has a wire fence on each side to keep animals from straying onto the busy highway, as do other main roads and some secondary roads. However, in the main these have minimal population centres along them and are largely accessible only by car. Moreover, the area of the Forest is on so enormous a scale in relation to Epping Forest that any comparison or attempt to draw inferences from one to apply to the other is in my view meaningless.

Although, it is flanked to the east by the Southampton/Portsmouth conurbation and on the west by the Bournemouth/Poole conglomeration, the New Forest has most of its borders running onto open countryside or fairly rural villages. In that way it is very different from our Forest.

The New Forest is well worth a visit - although one would need numerous visits to get to know it well - it is only a couple of hours drive, if you choose your M25 experience with care, ie before 0600 hours! The Ordnance

Survey do a tourists map at 1 - 25000 which covers the whole Forest and you can take your pick of where to start. I would suggest that if you are going to tackle one of the larger woodland blocks, a compass would be handy.

*Harry Bitten*

## TO DISTANT MEMBERS

I recently had occasion to 'trawl' through our membership lists. I was amazed, and pleased, to find how many members we have who live away from the Forest area - that is beyond easy visiting distance.

Obviously you - those distant members - all have some past connection with the Forest... born here and spent a happy childhood around the Forest, lived here in the past, or when retired, moved away; from Cumbria to Cornwall and o'er the border, and some who have emigrated... for we have members in Holland, Switzerland, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

May I say, on behalf of our Committee and all our active members, how much we value and are grateful for your continued interest and support. Distant though it may be, Epping Forest as we all know is a very special place. Once you have lived here you do not forget it, but still value it and have a lingering interest in its protection.

As you will see from our Annual report, I mentioned you, collectively, at our recent Annual General Meeting, and that meeting sends you warm greetings. In a way you might perhaps value the Forest even more... for those of us who are able to easily visit the hills and glades of the Forest, must guard against 'taking it for granted'.

I came upon the following final paragraph from an historical sketch of the Forest written in the early half of the last century. It ends with a remark, so often used it is now almost a cliché, but very relevant even for today's Forest.

"Epping Forest, with its twiggy slopes of hornbeam, the spring sun on the beech-boles, the antlers among the bracken, its whispering groups of tits, and badgers sniffing the night-air, is a jewel of unpriceable worth and deserves a worthy setting. All who love it must be grateful for the liberty that is theirs, to wander freely in this old hunting ground of kings, their favourite of all the seventy Royal Forests in England: but they must never forget that the price of that liberty is unceasing vigilance"

*Ken Hoy*



## WALK REPORT

### Awayday to Leigh-on-Sea May 19 - Where were you?

It must be confessed that the weather portents were not brilliant on that Friday morning at 9.30am at the Bury Road car park. Moreover, the forecast spoke of showers and longer spells of rain and strong winds.

Obviously, this was enough to put off most of our usual walking colleagues! In fact, only one car was needed to convey those who did turn up to Hadleigh Castle Country Park car park where hordes of people (5!), who had proceeded there direct, greeted us on arrival.

So ten people and a dog walked down through the wooded slopes across the railway and on to the sea wall. We'd had a few spits and spots to start with but soon the weather improved markedly with no further rain and plenty of intermittent sunshine. The strongish wind was in our favour and we sped easily along the level, turfed path all the way to Old Leigh.

Here the party, less two and the dog, who had peeled off earlier, split between the benches and tables outside and the comfort zone inside the Crooked Billet. Outsiders sitting in the sunshine consumed cockles and prawns and smoked-salmon rolls. I don't know what the insiders consumed!

In due course we tackled the return journey against the wind and with a bit of uphill. A feature of the return was the tunnel of hawthorns and its heady blossom.

The walk up to the ruins of Hadleigh Castle was a bit of a challenge, but taken slowly at the pace of a Sherpa climbing Everest and carrying a grand piano, we all survived.

We broke for tea and walnut layer cake at the Sally Army cafe, after which a short level walk along a pleasant wooded lane took us back to the car park and then, in our case, an easy and speedy return via the A13 and A406.

You, or most of you, missed a nice day!

*Harry Bitten*

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### Walks

#### July 30<sup>th</sup> Sunday 2.00 pm. A walk around Upshire.

Meet in Upshire Village Hall car park (please park tidily at the far end). Upshire is 1.25 miles along Crown Hill, which is the turning off the Epping New Road just north of the WakeArms roundabout westwards to wards Waltham Abbey. The Village Hall is just opposite the church, where there's a tea and cake sale, waiting for us at the end of the walk!

*Leader: Sue McKinley  
GR 417 011*

#### August 16<sup>th</sup> Wednesday 10.30am. Hatfield Forest.

A walk around another ancient forest in Essex. Take the M11 to junction 8 at Stansted and take the old A120

eastwards towards Takeley and Great Dunmow. Turn southwards along the second turning on the right (signposted to Hatfield Forest). The carpark is ¾ mile along on the right; parking is free for members of the National Trust.

*Leader: Bill Dexter  
GR (OS map 167) 548 202*

### CENTENARY WALK

September 24<sup>th</sup> Sunday 9am – 5.30 pm.  
A day's walk through Epping Forest from Wanstead Flats in the south to Epping in the north. Lots of stopping points with chances to join (or leave). Lunch stop at the Robin Hood.

See article on page 7.

*Leader: Mike Whiteley  
(F.O.E.F. & Ramblers Assoc.)  
GR 419 860*

October 19<sup>th</sup> Thursday 1.30pm  
Natural Recycling. Find out how the fungi keep the Forest in good heart. Meet in Jack's Hill car park (north) - halfway between Wake Arms roundabout and Theydon Bois on B172.

*Leader Tricia Moxey  
QR 435 996*

#### November 10<sup>th</sup> Friday 10.30am. Autumn colours.

A leisurely walk around Fairmead Bottom. Meet in the carpark on Fairmead Road, which runs parallel to the A104 Epping New Road. Turn west at the Robin Hood roundabout; left at the first tea-hut and then downhill to the carpark on the right.

*Leader: Ken Hoy  
GR 408 967*

### Forest Festival

The Forest Festival returns to Chingford Plain this year on Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> September 11am - 4pm. We shall have our stall there, where you can come for a chat and/or buy any of our 'goods' for sale! This event has proved very popular in recent years and attracts a wide variety of events and stalls. As usual there will be an assortment of costumed staff and participants. Do please support us. Sadly this might be the sole Chingford Festival this year as Chingford Village Festival has been cancelled because the organiser, Mrs Irene Bull, is unwell. She intends to return next year

## ADVANCE NOTICE

### Forest Supper

Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2006

## OTHER DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

**Epping Forest Visitor Centre**  
**Sunday 9 July** 1.00pm - 5.00pm **The Harmonious Recorder**  
Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge

**Saturday 22nd July** 2.00pm - 11.00pm

**Music in Wanstead Park**  
*The Temple Garden, Wanstead Park*

**Sunday 23 July** 11.30am - 5.00pm  
**Tudor Music and dancing**  
*Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge*

Saturday 29 July 10.00am - 4.00pm  
**Guided Walk: Explore the Forest in Summer**  
*Meet at St Peters Church, St Peters Avenue, E17.*

**Saturday 5 August** 1.00pm - 4.00pm  
**William Morris in the Forest**  
*Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge*

**Tuesday 8 August** 3.00pm  
**Open Air Performance - Wind in the Willows**  
*The Temple, Wanstead Park*  
Tickets available from the Visitor Centre. Cost £9.50 adults, £5.00 children (5-16), under 5s free.

**Sunday 27 August and Monday 28 August** 12 noon - 4.00pm  
Cost £2.00 per child.  
**Self Guided Trail: Hunt for the Hidden Treasure of the High Beach Highwayman!**  
*Epping Forest Visitor Centre*

For further details phone: 020 8508 0028

**Epping Forest Field Centre**  
**An Introduction to being Inspired**  
Kirstie Beaven Sun 2<sup>nd</sup> July

**Discovering Wildflowers**  
Neill Fuller Sat 8<sup>th</sup> July

**Insects, Spiders and other Invertebrates**  
Geoffrey Kibby Sun 16<sup>th</sup> July

**Aquatic Plant Identification**  
Ken Adams Sat 29<sup>th</sup> July

**Walking with History**  
Peter Lawrence Sat 19<sup>th</sup> August

**Small Mammal Ecology and Survey Techniques**  
Mammal Society Staff Sat 19<sup>th</sup> August

**Epping Forest: the Cockney Playground**  
Peter Lawrence Sun 20<sup>th</sup> August

**Shield Bugs**  
Roger Hawkins Sun 3<sup>rd</sup> September

**Tree & Shrub Identification**  
Ken Adams Sat 9<sup>th</sup> -Sun 10<sup>th</sup> Sept

**Identifying Trees in Leaf**  
John Wood Sat 16<sup>th</sup> Sept

**Survival for Beginners**  
Andrew Browning Sun 17<sup>th</sup> Sept

**Using Environmental Crafts with Young People** Etlis Rothney Sat 23<sup>rd</sup> Sept

**Discovering Badgers**  
Don Hunford Sun 24<sup>th</sup> Sept

**The Intriguing World of Fungi**  
Tricia Moxey Sat 30<sup>th</sup> September

**Beginners Guide to Fungi**  
Tricia Moxey Sun 1<sup>st</sup> October

**Fungi & their Identification for Beginners**  
Geoffrey Kibby Sat 7<sup>th</sup> October

**Advanced Fungus Identification**  
Geoffrey Kibby Sun 8<sup>th</sup> October

**Mammal Identification**  
Mammal Society Staff Sat 21<sup>st</sup> - Sun 22<sup>nd</sup> October

**Autumn Walk**  
Centre Staff Sun 29<sup>th</sup> October

For details on Field Centre courses:  
Tel: 020 8502 8500 or e-mail:  
enquiries.ef@field-studies.council.org

**EF Conservation Volunteers**  
Sunday 16 July - Two Tree Island  
Leaders: Peter Lyons & Chris English

**Sun 23 July - Loughton Brook**  
*Chris English & Pat MacFarlane*

**Sun 30 July - Thames Valley Bog**  
*Spencer Cleminson & Ralph Boswell*

**Sun 6 August - Forest School Pond**  
*Peter Lyons & Pat MacFarlane*

**Tuesday 15 August - TBA**  
Ralph Boswell or Peter Lyons.

**Sunday 20 August - Chingford Plain**  
*Ralph Boswell & Pat Webb*

**Sunday 27 August - Oak Hill Pond**  
*Peter Lyons & Peter Vaughan*

**Sunday 3 September - Forest Festival, Chingford Plain**  
*Peter Lyons & Brian McGhie*

**Tuesday 12 September - TBA**  
Ralph Boswell or Peter Lyons.

**Sunday 17 September - Pond Task**  
*Spencer Cleminson & Peter Lyons*

**Sunday 24 September - Fir and Pond Wood, Potters Bar**  
*Mark Smith & Ralph Boswell*

We meet at The Warren at 9:30

For further information please email  
efcv2@yahoo.co.uk or contact  
Peter Lyons on 020 529 3060

**Essex Wildlife Trust**  
**Epping Forest Group**  
**Sunday 3 September**  
**FOREST FESTIVAL**

The annual Forest event— this year on Chingford Plain.

Details: 0208 508 0028

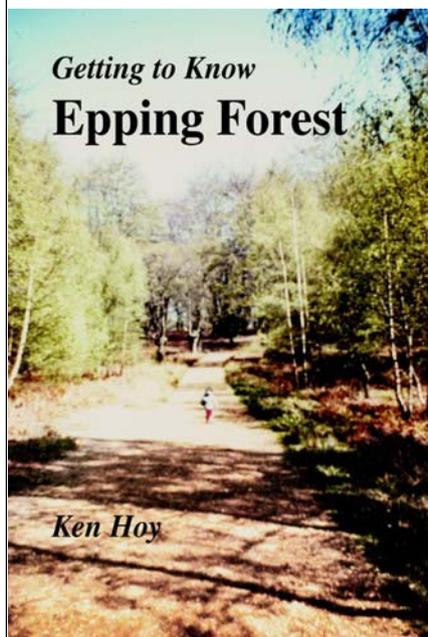
**Sunday 22 October FUNGI FORAY**

Meet the Forest fungi first hand!  
Led by Tricia Moxey and Warden Brian McGhie, lots of good specimens are promised!

**Meet:** 10:30 am at NR entrance at Coopersale.

### *Getting to Know* **EPPING FOREST**

Ken's book that names and describes the history of over 200 Forest place names



Copies are available  
from Seymour Moss on  
020 8529 0620

£6-00 to members  
(£7-00 inc. p&p).

# THE FRIENDS OF EPPING FOREST

## Annual Report 2005- 2006

As you will know from the last Newsletter this has been a very sad year.

Just before Christmas, Jeremy Wisenfeld, the Forest Superintendent tragically died after some months of illness and treatment. He had been Superintendent for less than 5 years and had been working until just before his death.

Then at Christmas Dr Eric Dormer, who had been a Verderer since 1981, died after bravely fighting a long illness for several years. Apart from the personal loss to their families, they are both a loss to the Forest ... and certainly a loss to us as they were both always friendly, approachable and prepared to listen to our views.

We have welcomed the re-election of the four Forests Verderers, including Dr Joanne Thomas who fills the vacancy left by the death of Dr Dormer.

The Forest's designation as a 'Special Area of Conservation' has been confirmed. This gives a degree of further protection to the Forest.

The year has been eventful in many ways.

### 1 Preserving the Forest

During the year several issues of major importance have arisen to which we have responded.

The most fundamental of these, and still a current question, is the matter of increased cattle grazing on the Forest and what this could ultimately mean for the Forest.

This issue dominated our Newsletters, so you will be aware that we – your Committee – are disappointed with the public consultation on grazing that the Conservators conducted.

The consultation asked in simple terms 'do you like to see cattle on the Forest?'

The proposals were to enclose large zones or compartments and eventually to fence these 'safe zones' along all the busy roads from Wanstead to Epping. That is at least 45 Km or nearly 30 miles of permanent fencing. In an equally simple approach, it was hoped that cars would slow down.

However, at a recent Forest Forum meeting, we were assured that the consultation was just an initial exploration of public opinion – it was not a 'vote' in any way - and no overall strategy had yet been decided.

However we believe a strategy is crucial. Whilst we were told that one single solution for the whole forest was unlikely and that further consultation on an area basis will be needed, an overall strategy is needed as individual areas should not be decided on a site by site process. The whole is greater than the parts and a strategy needs to ensure this is so.

As we have said in the Newsletter our own response was too long and detailed to include in full in the Newsletter. A copy can be obtained from the Secretary. It is also available on our web-site

We also responded to the Integrated Site Plan for Wanstead Flats. We felt again that the most important issue raised by that consultation – the one that potentially could have the greatest impact on the future of the Flats - was the question of cattle grazing and consequently the inevitable need for the Flats to be fenced. The Wanstead consultation was before the public consultation document on cattle grazing on the Forest as a whole and pre-empted consideration within the wider context of the Forest. We thought that grazing and fencing of the flats was in any case inappropriate in such a widely used urban recreational area – both formal and informal recreation.

Fortunately, when the report came before them, the Epping Forest and Commons Committee, decided to leave the grazing question on the Flats until an overall grazing strategy for the whole Forest had been determined.

They agreed the balance between the amount of formal & informal recreation was about right, although it is hoped to provide for more formal sporting activities in the summer but without taking land at the moment used for informal recreation.

The Committee supported retaining the present name 'Wanstead Flats' against the suggested 16<sup>th</sup> century name 'Wanstead Heath'. We had opted or this decision in our response.

We have also contributed comments to the proposals for increased public access to the buffer lands of Woodredon and Warlies Parks and Copped Hall. Generally we welcome the increase of access, but high-lighted the problem of 'poaching' (breaking-up the ground surface) by cattle particularly near gateways and stiles and also where the provisional

new horse-rides crossed public footpaths and at access points where walkers and riders used the same gateways. We also suggested that dogs should be under close control and not allowed into the various woods where the deer obtain shelter. We asked that paths be mown through the long grass of free-access areas to 'direct' use to the paths and thus protect wildlife and the young deer fawns in June and July. These points have all been welcomed and taken into consideration in the final Report. But the new permissive horse rides are to be reviewed again later.

We have been asked to contribute to the debate about horse riding in the Forest. Our Secretary has been involved in drafting a code of conduct for horse riders.

We have been particularly concerned about the opening, for free-range riding, of the Bury Wood and Fairmead Thicket areas; closed to free-range riding since the 1970's because of the vulnerability to damage of the numerous narrow footpaths in this particular area.

The proposal to move the Forest Information Centre to Chingford Plain, that was discussed here at the last AGM, has been deferred for at least five years. You will recall we expressed concern about the proposal if it involves the loss of the Centre at High Beach.

Looking at a wider picture, the draft East of England Plan – the plan to build 11,000 houses in the Epping Forest District alone - upon which we made detailed comments last year, is now being revised and a new draft will be published in June.

Appearance at the 'examination in public' has been severely restricted. Even the Conservators of the Forest, despite strong protests, were not given a chance to 'appear'.

But, neither the Government or the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) will say where in the E.F. District's 11,000 houses can be built! Before protests and the petition, it was 18,000! However it seems accurate figures are difficult to find as the Dept. of the Deputy Prime Minister is apparently now saying that the 11,000 be increased by 8,000 more!

The local authority has been told that is for them to decide - or perhaps I should say 'discover' – where this mythical number of houses should go! No provision have been made for the necessary extra infrastructure – the water supplies, sewage, transport, traffic etc.

## 2 Activities

You will know from the Newsletter that in the autumn we contributed financially (and physically) to the planting of young oak trees at the new 'Trafalgar Wood' on the Copped Hall Estate. This was a successful event, some very sturdy young oaks – 10-15 years old – were planted. Our involvement, as a positive contribution, was warmly welcomed by the Epping Forest & Commons Committee.

We have provided financial support for the new research that has been undertaken into pollen analysis of the sediment deposit from the Lodge Road bog. This was previously surveyed in the 1970's and found to be some 4000 years old. The present research is to confirm or otherwise the age at which the Small-leaved Lime began to be replaced by the present four species of trees that dominate the Forest.

During the year our many various regular activities have been successfully undertaken:

Our popular walks programme has continued. The Centenary Walk was as successful as ever in September. It was organised for the 21<sup>st</sup> time by Harry Bitten – to whom our grateful thanks must go. We are also grateful that Harry has found a willing successor to continue organising the event.

As usual the Forest Supper was another happy occasion that was well attended.

As I am sure you know we 'appeared' at many events, fetes and festivals as in previous year.

Various Officers and Committee members represented us at the meetings of the several other bodies, such as the Epping Forest & Commons Committee, London Green Belt Council and the Council for the Protection of Rural Essex, to which we are affiliated or in which we have an interest.

The Newsletters have been published regularly and continue to be very well received.

## 3 Looking Ahead

During the year, a new Superintendent will presumably acquaint himself with the Forest and the local organisations that are involved and concerned about the Forest.

We intend to establish the close amicable relations that we have always had with past Superintendents. We intend to maintain close relations and regular meetings with the Verderers and as always keep in touch with the matters discussed by the Forest administration

We will continue to press for more open discussion of the fundamental issues of the management of the Forest, the ways in which the Management Plan is being interpreted and put into practice ... and the apparent intention to create large areas of open wood-pasture to provide for increased extensive cattle grazing. Our concern is the far-reaching implications of this policy and the inevitable permanent changes to the Forest that could result.

In the coming months the policy of grazing in the Forest will be considered. We intend pressing for an overall strategy to be discussed for the Forest as a whole, before details are decided for individual areas.

We will seek to establish what are the management intentions in these matters? What 'sort of the Forest' do we wish to see in the coming decades and how this is to be achieved?

The whole matter of the 'M11 Corridor' development is obviously an on-going fight as far as the Forest and Epping Forest District are concerned. We must remain watchful about the revised plans that are soon to be published. Co-ordination and co-operation with other local organisations, the CPRE, the Conservators and the Local Authority is essential.

We are about to replace the stands that display our exhibition and during the year will complete the renewal and

refurbishment of the exhibition itself.

We propose to consider in the coming months, our overall objectives within the terms of our Constitution and to discuss our financial strategy ... the purposes for which we should use & reserve our capital resources.

## 4 Thanks

As you have heard this has been an extremely eventful year and a great deal of extra work has been undertaken by a few individuals. I am sure you will wish me to end this Report by thanking the various Officers and Committee members upon whom this work fallen.

We must, however also thank those who have been involved in the regular jobs that keep an organisation like ours functioning smoothly. I say similar words of thanks every year but in no way does that lessen the importance of the tasks – large and small – that are so willingly carried out, or the sincerity and depth of the thanks.

I would also like to remind you that we have quite a considerable number of members who have moved away, even overseas, but no doubt having happy memories, still support us and have a continuing interest that is maintained by those past connections with the Forest. I would like to send greetings to those members, on behalf of this AGM.

Finally, our Committee has endorsed this Report and I am seeking its adoption by this Annual General Meeting tonight. If approved by this meeting the Report will be published as usual in the Summer Newsletter and I would hope that anyone with strongly differing views – or supporting views - will write to the Editor. We believe we have the support of our members ...

the adoption of this Report will confirm this.

**Ken Hoy, Chairman.**

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## CURRENT FRIENDS OF EPPING FOREST COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Judy Adams	Loughton	020 8418 0730	Robert Levene	Snaresbrook	020 8989 0884
Peggy Bitten (Sec.)	Chingford	020 8529 8594	Sue McKinley (Vice-Chair)	Upshire	019 9271 2014
Harry Bitten	Chingford	020 8529 8594	Derek Meakin	Chigwell	020 8500 1571
Irene Buchan	Chingford	020 8529 6423	Seymour Moss (Memb. Sec.)	Chingford	020 8529 0620
Alan Curran	Buckhurst Hill	020 8504 8720	Tricia Moxey	Chipping Ongar	01277 364 522
Bill Dexter	Chingford	020 8529 1427	Peter Read	Chingford	020 8524 1659
Jim Gimson	S. Woodford	020 8989 3282	Tony Sheppard (Treas.)	Woodford Grn	020 8504 8288
Ken Hoy (Chairman)	High Easter	012 4523 1839			