

Friends of Epping Forest



Newsletter Summer 2016

www.friendsofeppingforest.org.uk

THE EPPING FOREST BIG LITTER PICK

Litter is one of the Forest's key challenges affecting the visitor experience, posing risks to wildlife and reducing the amenity of the Forest, as a special place! In addition, it costs over £300,000 per year to deal with it.

The Friends have been working with the City on a few localised litter problems in the Forest. However most recently, working with the Epping Forest Centenary Trust, we were able to engage Forest wide through coordinating the Epping Forest Big Litter Pick. Held on the weekend of 4 to 6 March, the Forest event coincided with a national initiative led by *Country Life* magazine and the Keep Britain Tidy Group, Clean for the Queen. That programme was designed to encourage communities to spring clean the environment in preparation for celebrations of the Queen's 90th birthday in April.

For the Friends and the Trust, it provided a great chance to engage with other Forest groups and individuals who are already working hard removing litter from the Forest, contributing to the work undertaken by the Conservators. The Conservators supported the event with the supply of rubbish bags and a very speedy collection service by the Litter Cart team at the end of the event.

As a first time event, we thought it was a great start and – subject to funding – we hope to repeat it next year. After the event, we were approached by several other organisations keen to support it in the future. We would like to include more

“ A very successful Litter Pick this morning with a great turnout from the Committee and Members. Apart from 20+ sacks of cans, bottles and general litter we also hauled a pram, Henry Hoover, suitcases, office drinks machine and.....the proverbial kitchen sink. Well done to all, and huge thanks to Julia for organising the event. ”

Quote from a participant



The Friends team at High Beach after a successful pick. Photo Peter Wrobel.

information about litter and its impact and perhaps engage with more schools.

We know that litter is an emotive issue. It has been good for us to play our part in a practical way to help clean the Forest, while longer term, we explore other initiatives to discourage the dumping of litter in the first place. It would be good to see less litter lying around to be collected in future!

Overall, eight groups were involved, encompassing more than 120 people on seven sites. More than 150 bags of rubbish were collected.

At Bell Common, Epping, the Epping Forest Centenary Trust collected 12 bags, while at High Beach the Friends filled 15 bags. Over in Buckhurst Hill, the Centenary Trust's Happy Loppers notched up 15 bags at Knighton Woods and Lords Bushes, the same number as Forest School pupils and staff at Forest Rise, Snaresbrook. Further south, the Bushwood Area Residents Association filled 25 bags.

In Wanstead Park, the Friends of Wanstead Parklands collected 20 bags, while the record for the day went to the Epping Forest Outdoor Group and the Wren Group, which together collected a total of 45 bags.

Judy Adams

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Committee Members

Chairman: Judy Adams
judith.adams21@btinternet.com 020 8418 0730

Vice-Chairman: Sue McKinley
suemckinley1@aol.com 01992 712014

Secretary: Mike Smith
secretary@friendsofeppingforest.org.uk 020 8530 2564

Treasurer: Alan Curran
alan.curran3@ntlworld.com 020 8504 8720

Membership Sec: Jean Brockington
jean.brockington@btopenworld.com 020 8529 3077

Tricia Moxey
triciaa_moxey214@yahoo.com 01277 364522

Newsletter Editor: Pete Wrobel
pete@wrobel.net 020 8539 1052

The Friends is a Registered Charity No: 299970.
Committee Members are the Trustees of the Charity.

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

QR code – from phone to web

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



Dear Friend...

It has been wonderful to see the sun lately and know that spring and now summer is on its way. Mandarin ducks have been exploring the pond at High Beach, but sensibly moved on to quieter waters to breed. At Connaught Water, a pair of Goosander were on their way north to breed. In May, we enjoyed sharing the High Beach Path with partially sighted children, who reminded us just how uplifting a visit to the Forest can be!

It is a new beginning for the Friends. On 14 March, members of the Friends were invited to a Special General Meeting to consider the proposal put forward by the Trustees. The proposal endorsed by the membership present by a vote of 60 for and 4 against agreed that "This meeting supports the Friends Trustees' view that in principle and subject to no impediments, it would be in best interests of the Friends of Epping Forest to form a new organisation with the Epping Forest Centenary Trust, given their near identical charitable purposes and the likelihood that they will pursue those purposes more effectively together."

This landmark decision by the Friends acknowledges our contribution to the Forest to date, as well as heralding a commitment to develop our activities well into the future.



Egyptian geese are now established breeders in the south of the Forest. Photo Peter Wrobel.

The combined activities and skills could help secure the sustainability of the Friends' current activities and enable more effectively the development of new activities and ways of working that could help us to respond to future pressures and opportunities. It means we could in the longer term become an organisation that could be supported by staff as well as an increasing number of volunteers.

The Committee will soon start working with EFCT on the elements required to form a new organisation and is currently seeking funding for support to help us do this. We hope it will not be too long before we can come back to members to seek consent to the action required to make this happen.

Meanwhile you will see from this newsletter how much has been going on, by the Friends and in the Forest and surrounding area. Do have a read of our invite for new supporters at the Centre too.

Judy Adams



Oak canopy at Hollow Ponds. Photo Peter Wrobel.

FOREST MATTERS

Forests of the Commonwealth

In Commonwealth Week this year, the Queen received the dedication of Epping Forest to the “Queen’s Commonwealth Canopy” project from the Lord Mayor of London.

The 53-nation strong Commonwealth supports 21 per cent of the global total of forest areas, including natural areas and indigenous vegetation (excluding plantations or monocultures). As you may imagine, the Commonwealth country with the largest area of forest is Canada with 347,000 thousand hectares, followed by Australia, India and Zambia.

The canopy initiative is designed to create a network of forest conservation projects throughout the Commonwealth to mark Her Majesty’s service and dedication to the Commonwealth. It aims to link Commonwealth countries through the preservation of all types of natural forest for future generations, showing the capacity of the Commonwealth, individually and collectively, to act together and to benefit from shared knowledge and experience.

The initiative, conceived by the charity Cool Earth, is being led by the Royal Commonwealth Society, in partnership with

Cool Earth and the Commonwealth Forestry Association.

The idea of linking projects is to share best practice, to raise awareness globally of the value of saving forest and indigenous vegetation and the impact of climate change, to use existing relationships of the Commonwealth to create new, collaborative conservation initiatives, and to employ the concerted power of a major coordinated initiative to access international funding for forest protection.

Projects considered for inclusion should be endorsed by the relevant government and forestry/conservation authority; contain clear objectives that include sustainable natural forest conservation; and recognise the rights of indigenous and local people in forest management. We wait to see what implications this will have and opportunities it may present for Epping Forest.

Find out more at www.queenscommonwealthcanopy.org and www.coolearth.org

Changing places

Alderman Gordon Haines has now completed his spell as Chairman of the Epping Forest & Commons Committee. In recent times Chairmen have held that position for no more than three years. ►



Showing the way forward: Alderman Gordon Haines on last year's Centenary Walk. Photo Judy Adams.

- ▶ However, Gordon was given special authorisation to stay on for a further year. The role of Chairman has become increasingly onerous and we would like to thank him for the exceptional amount of work and time he has put in on behalf of the Committee and the support he has given to the Friends. You may remember him from his annual attendance at the Centenary Walk or at the Forest Supper! He has been supportive of our work at the Centre too.

The retiring Chairman normally stays on in the role of Deputy Chairman but in this case he is standing down, although remaining as a Committee Member. Gordon's Deputy, Philip Woodhouse, has been elected to become Chairman and Graeme Smith to be Deputy Chairman. We wish them well in their new roles.

City of London Corporation (Open Spaces) Bill 2015-16

The Bill is making steady progress through the various stages. You can follow it here: <http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2015-16/cityoflondoncorporationopenspaces.html>

Epping Forest Management Plan Consultation

As you will be aware, we made extensive comments to this consultation in the autumn of 2015. You will shortly be able to see a summary of the comments made on the website. Watch that space: www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/green-spaces/epping-forest/about-us/Pages/consultations.aspx

The key challenges ahead are how the Conservators respond to this consultation and how they plan to take it forward.

Protecting the Forest through Car Park Management

The Forest has approximately 46 car parks across the Forest, whose purpose is to provide for Forest visitors. This is a large number to maintain and care for, making considerable demands on the Conservators.

Following an initial review of car parks, the Conservators have identified a number of car parks that are frequently used for other purposes including by commuters journeying to work. Worse still, a number of car parks are being used for fly tipping. Depending on the nature of the material dumped, including in some cases asbestos, the cost to clear one car park can be very considerable.

For that reason, you will see that gates have been installed at the entrances to a number of car parks (e.g. The Stubbles), sometimes a single gate and in other cases as at Long Running, the entrances have been upgraded with two gates, enabling access to be excluded if necessary whilst allowing any vehicles within the car park to exit. These are not to be used day to day, but will enable the Conservators to temporarily close car parks which have been specifically subject to abuse and/or to permit the closure of car parks at certain times to prevent for example, non-Forest users accessing. As well as improving security, work is also being undertaken to improve the surface of the car parks to respond to persistent problems of potholes at the entrances.

The Friends welcome these initiatives which help to protect the Forest and Forest users. We have asked that when car parks are closed or to be closed, there is a notice for visitors informing them of likely opening times, where that is feasible.



The Stubbles car park, Loughton. Photo Judy Adams.

In addition, if you spot any fly tipping taking place on the Forest, please inform the Conservators by ringing 020 8532 1010. There is a £500 reward for people reporting fly tips and which lead to a successful prosecution. But don't forget that if the fly tipping is on the highway, it will be Highways that is responsible, not the Conservators. **Judy Adams**



American students bring dance to the Forest! Photo Judy Adams.

FRIENDS MATTERS

American university students visit the Forest

The Friends of Epping Forest joined a “member” of the Friends, Dr Robert Field, who now lectures at the University of Wyoming in sustainability and environmental issues, on a walk with students on a semester in the UK, getting to know Britain. Due to his enthusiasm and love of the Forest, having been brought up in Woodford, he organised a Forest walk and visit to a local pub for lunch to expand their appreciation of British culture! Led by Peter and Judy Adams, the walk from Theydon Bois to Loughton included students from a variety of disciplines. The photo illustrates two dance students expressing their creative talents at Loughton Camp!

Big Garden Birdwatch

I suspect many of you may have taken part in the Big Garden Birdwatch on Jan 19-20 this year. The Visitor Centre joined in for the first time and has hopes of expanding our involvement next year. While the Centre feeding area is not quite a garden, it was interesting to see how we compared with the national picture.

The house sparrow was the front runner nationally, but we only recorded the house sparrow in tenth position. Our front runner is the blue tit – probably not surprising given that the Centre is virtually in woodland. And while nationally the starling came in second place, we did not even record it in the top ten. Have a look at the top listings here.

UK list: House sparrow, starling, blue tit, blackbird, wood pigeon, goldfinch, chaffinch, great tit, robin, long tailed tit

Centre list: blue tit, chaffinch, robin, great tit and dunnock and wood pigeon, blackbird and nuthatch, carrion crow, house sparrow and coal tit (tied scores are shown as a group joined by “and”).

For further information- visit the RSPB website at www.rspb.org.uk/discoverandenjoynature/discoverandlearn/birdwatch/results.aspx

This year’s Centenary Walk

Our annual event, the Epping Forest Centenary Walk, walking from Manor Park to Epping is based on the walk established in 1978 to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the passing of the Epping Forest Act 1878. Come and join with us, to celebrate Epping Forest!

Organised by the Friends of Epping Forest, with support from West Essex Ramblers, Epping Forest Centenary Trust and the Corporation of London, the walk provides the opportunity to walk the entire length of Epping Forest in a day (about 15 miles) or take part in one of the local sections of the “long” walk. This year, after lunch at the View, we will continue up the western side of the Forest, visiting High Beach, the Verderers’ View and St Thomas’ Quarters, hopefully to see some deer.

9:00 am Start at the Junction of Forest Drive and Capel Road, about 250 metres north of Manor Park Station

9:50 am Meet at the Green Man roundabout, Leytonstone

11:00 am Arrive at Best Western Hotel Epping Forest, Oak Hill, IG8 9NY – who will provide us with a welcome cup of coffee

11:20 am Depart from the Best Western Hotel Epping Forest

12:30 pm Arrive at Queen Elizabeth Hunting Lodge, E4 7QH for lunch stop

1:15 pm Depart from the Queen Elizabeth Hunting Lodge

2:15 pm Depart from High Beach

4:30 – 5 pm Arrive at Bell Common, Epping at the end of the walk.

Any enquiries, please phone walk leader, Mike Whiteley, on 0208 524 2737, or Judy Adams 020 8418 0730. See the Friends’ website, www.friendsofeppingforest.org.uk, for more detail and joining point locations. ➤

Last year’s Centenary walkers in Gilberts Slade. Photo Richard Arnopp.





Volunteers Linda (left) and Denise take advantage of a quiet period to repair the display rack. Photo Judy Adams.

► Epping Forest Visitor Centre

Our two years of operation have seen us supporting 33,500 visitors, operating 361 days and providing 5,759 hours of volunteer investment (nearly equivalent to 4 full time staff) in the Centre! We have extended the opening hours, taken out old tired or empty displays, got some events going, refreshed and walked many of the local walks, put up signage in the building, at the entrance of the access road and on the building – and are going strong.

We have also acquired some new equipment, opened up the access road with help from Epping Forest Centenary Trust and the Conservators. Volunteers have learned more about the Forest through meeting our visitors and training events. We know a lot more about what visitor's value about the Forest. Many of our visitors are in the Forest for the first time or after many years.

We have also run more events at the centre, from Open Days, the Big Garden Birdwatch and soon to take place our special Disabled Access week. So why not come and see us – a great place to meet "friends".

If you are keen to get involved, why not think about joining us as an Information Assistant volunteer?

Our thanks to Loughton Town Council

A grant award to the Friends from Loughton Town Council is enabling us to purchase a laptop, cabling and a nest box camera so that our visitors will be able to view the nest box (and residents) live. We'll also be able to provide short video clips for viewing and presentations in the Centre linking up with the new TV plasma screen recently supplied by the Conservators. We'll let you know of our first viewings.

Partnership with U3A Buckhurst Hill

Following their earlier support, members of their Photography Club are now taking photos for various projects at the Centre. They hope to produce four seasonal panels, to illustrate the Forest trails available from the Centre to help us produce updates and to add more interest to the entrance lobby of the Centre. This is great news and we've included a sample below to whet your appetite. Many thanks to the photographers!

Judy Adams



Duckling on Knighton Lake and, below, pussy willow: pictures for spring. Photos U3A Buckhurst Hill Photography Group.



HELP US HELP YOU – SEND US YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS!



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

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

FRIENDS OF EPPING FOREST

ANNUAL REVIEW 2015/2016

Registered charity number 299970. www.friendsofeppingforest.org.uk



Alderman Gordon Haines (left) and Sir Roger Gifford at the official opening of Gifford Wood, 23 September 2015 – with children from Uphire Primary Foundation School, who planted trees in the Wood two years earlier. Photo Peter Wrobel.

Introduction

It has been another busy year, especially in terms of our work to “stand up for the Forest”. We’ve seen the government change its approach to the Green Belt, local authorities seeking to use the Green Belt to meet housing targets and a review of the large-scale conservation approach. It is pleasing to see Yorkshire and the Lake District National Parks “growing” to meet at several points.

In the Forest, we have had the major consultation on the future ten-year plan for the Forest. We raised areas where we have particular concerns, including the need for a policy framework, litter, the Green Belt, the risk of managing the Forest more like a local park than a Forest, and the nature and sustainability of the present programme of wood pasture restoration. The declining resources of Epping Forest make it even more critical to focus on the priorities. We expect a response by the Conservators to comments received shortly.

For the Friends, it has been a busier than usual year. The increasing commitments at the Visitor Centre, the “merger” discussions with the Epping Forest Centenary Trust and the ongoing threats to the Forest have given us no respite.

Increasing awareness, understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the Forest

The Epping Forest Centenary Walk, jointly with the Conservators, West Essex Ramblers and the Epping Forest Centenary Trust, attracted record numbers this year – 180. With increasing awareness of how the Epping Forest Act saved the Forest, and about the extent the Forest covers today, the walk continues to provide a worthy celebration. Our thanks to those who continue to make it possible, including our partners above, and the participants, including the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee, sporting at one point Friends of Epping Forest hi vis jackets! ➤



(Left to right.) Our guided walks remain popular, though rain reduced numbers (Photo Ron Andrews); Vice Chairman Sue McKinley

- We have maintained our popular walks programme, with 13 walks attracting 264 participants – down on last year (311), largely due to rain. Our outreach work, spreading the word about the Forest and Friends, took us to five community events: at Swaines Green, Highams Park, Loughton, High Beach and the Woodland Burial Park at North Weald.

Our operation of the Epping Forest Visitor Centre at High Beach since 2014 has helped to raise our profile in the Forest community, with groups, elected councillors, the public and the Conservators. Visitor numbers (now totalling 31,500), income and our contribution of volunteer hours are all up. The support from our volunteers at the Centre since our opening equates to four full-time members of staff.

We are also hoping this “project” will encourage further opportunities for joint working with the Conservators in the interests of the Forest and its visitors.

We were pleased to attend the formal opening of Gifford Wood in September, an event marking the culmination of our fundraising efforts, promotion and community tree planting. Sir Roger and Lady Gifford attended and saw first-hand the value of their contribution and the marvellous lych-gate installed at one of the entrances.

Standing up for the Forest

As mentioned in the Introduction, threats to the Green Belt and a changing response to landscape-scale conservation and protection continue to pose risks for the Forest. Responding

to planning applications still ranks highly in our work. The continuing development of new housing in High Beach is, worryingly, placing increasing demands on the Friends.

More communities within the Forest are working to produce Neighbourhood Plans, where the Friends could make a contribution. Regrettably we are unable with our present level of volunteer support to contribute to the work of each of these plans. Certainly we found that working with Highams Park enabled us to increase awareness and understanding of Epping Forest within their area.

Working with Epping Forest Centenary Trust allowed us to run the Forest-wide Big Litter Pick, enabling us to link our concerns/campaign over the amount of litter in the Forest with “taking action”. Nine groups participated across the Forest – from Wanstead to Epping – providing a fine start to what we hope will become an annual event, working with and through other local Forest groups.

A major project this year was the preparation of our response to the draft Management Plan for the Forest. This will set the agenda for the Forest management for the next ten years and potentially much longer. Many of the questions were very specific, demonstrating the need for a policy first; notably cycling, heritage, wood pasture, arts and visitor management. We welcome the chance to contribute to policy development in these and other areas.

We also responded to consultation on the proposed legislative changes to the Epping Forest Act through a Various



...y at the Visitor Centre open day (Photo Judy Adams); and RIP Chris the Cuckoo, a Newsletter regular (Photo Phil Atkinson/BTO)

Powers Bill. While many proposals were largely technical updates, the proposals concerning an extension of licence duration (currently a maximum of three years) do pose risks of alienating areas from the Forest for longer periods. Those members who have provided email addresses are now sent details on consultations, enabling them to respond and increasing our voice. People's perceptions and views on future management of the two Iron Age camps were also sought.

Enabling the work of the Friends

Increasing income, membership, volunteers and our profile and influence underpin our ability to deliver our activities and sustain, develop and grow the organisation. During the past year, our income has increased, largely due to a substantial legacy and through our operation of the Visitor Centre, supported by donations.

Our membership has declined (1,457 at March 2016 from 1,586 last year). New members are joining, but at a slower rate than the loss of longstanding members. Our major annual event for our membership and invited friends is the Forest Supper, well attended this year, and providing the usual sales, quizzes and good company. We were pleased to welcome the Chairman of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee, Alderman Gordon Haines, and his wife along with several of the Verderers.

Our membership and volunteers are the lifeblood of our organisation. Volunteer support has been very good at the Visitor Centre, though we have seen a decline in other areas,

including the Epping Forest Centenary Walk and attending fairs and fetes.

Our profile and influence continue to grow, largely on account of our work at the Centre and our ongoing contributions to consultations.

At the same time, the opportunities to have a greater impact on the Forest through "standing up for the Forest" and delivering programmes are increasing. Furthermore, the demands on charities in terms of management, data protection and health and safety and more are also increasing. We are now simply unable to operate in ways that we could in earlier days.

We welcomed the approach from Epping Forest Centenary Trust to meet and discuss a merger/development of a new Trust, mindful that we could be stronger together.

At the Special General Meeting held on 14 March, the membership (64 present) overwhelmingly supported the proposal (60 for and 4 against) put forward by the Committee of Trustees that "it was in the best interest of the Friends to form a new organisation with Epping Forest Centenary Trust." This landmark decision could give us a better chance to more effectively respond to the opportunities and demands of the Forest, and to develop our membership, income, volunteers and influence to help to meet the challenges we face. It could allow us to develop an organisation capable of supporting some paid staff and many more volunteers, enabling us to "do" so much more for the Forest. ➤

► Thank you

We thank the volunteer Information Assistants at the Visitor Centre, who work tirelessly to operate the Centre. We are grateful to our deliverers, who continue to stuff envelopes and deliver our newsletter locally. Thanks are especially due to Keith Foster, who retired this year as the Delivery Round coordinator after many years.

We also thank a number of unsung heroes, who donate their talk fees to the Friends, their photographs for use by the Friends, raffle prizes and gifts in kind.

Thank you too to the Conservators, who have supported and promoted a number of our key projects.

And a big thank you to all the committee members, the Friends' Trustees, all of whom are volunteers too.

Donations given in 2015/16

We would like to thank those who have made donations to the Friends including John Hayward, Miss Loft, Mrs Button, Mrs Dawkins, Mr & Mrs Haynes, Dr Shore, Dr Toms and Buckhurst Hill U3A group.

In addition, we received legacies from Ann Sansom and

Laurie Laughlin and donations in memory of John Trend Pearson (from his sister Anne Pearson and others).

Looking ahead to 2016/7

It is a difficult to remember a time when the demands on the Friends have been greater. A major task for the Friends, along with sustaining our current activities, will be to further the development of the new Trust with Epping Forest Centenary Trust. We will soon begin work on a new Memorandum and Articles, governance arrangements, a name, business plan and membership management. We aim to bring the detailed proposal back to the membership later this year.

We want to ensure that we develop an organisation that can respond more effectively to the challenges and opportunities and ensure the long-term future and sustainability of the "Friends" activities. Working with Epping Forest Centenary Trust this year has demonstrated the value of collaboration. We also look forward to delivering our programme supporting groups with disabilities to visit the Centre and the High Beach Easy Access Path.

We must ensure we can continue to play our part for many years to come.

Judy Adams, Chairman

THE FRIENDS OF EPPING FOREST NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**WEDNESDAY 20 JULY, 7.00 PM,
LOPPING HALL, 189 HIGH ROAD,
LOUGHTON IG10 4LF**

7:15 pm AGM
8:00 pm Tea/coffee
8:30 pm Talk: "The Relevance of Lopping Hall to the Story of the Forest", by Peter Adams, Verderer

Agenda for AGM:

1. Minutes of the last AGM held on 23 June 2015
2. Matters Arising
3. Chairman's Report 2015/16
4. Treasurer's Report
5. Election of Vice-Chairman
6. Election of Secretary
7. Election of Membership Secretary
8. Election of Committee Members
9. Election of Independent Examiner
10. Any Other Business

Honorary Committee members at present are:
Chairman Judy Adams (2015 - 2018)
Vice-Chairman: Sue McKinley (2013-2016)
Secretary: Mike Smith (2013-2016)
Treasurer: Alan Curran (2014-2017)
Membership Sec: Jean Brockington (2013-2016)
Committee members: Tricia Moxey and Pete Wrobel (Editor).

Committee members are re-elected each year (the present committee members due for election are willing to stand again). To submit nominations, please complete the form below and send it to: Mike Smith, Secretary, by Wednesday, 22 June 2016. The AGM will be followed by a talk on the history and origins of Lopping Hall.

NOMINATION FORM FOR ELECTION AT AGM (either cut out or photocopy)

I nominate for the office of Vice-Chairman/Secretary/
Membership Secretary/Committee member:

Name

Address

Tel

Signature of candidate

Signature of proposer

Print name Tel.....

Signature of seconder

Print name Tel.....

Statement by nominee (up to 200 words on your experience and how you will contribute to the Friends).

[Send to Mike Smith, Secretary, by Wednesday 22 June.]

PLANNING: A WORD ABOUT OUR WORK



Forest Lodge, near Wake Arms. The Friends objected to proposed development plans. The application for 19 new houses was refused. Photo Peter Adams.

Friends Planning Officer Sue McKinley explains how we scrutinise planning applications to seek to ensure the preservation of the Forest's natural aspect.

Each month, Friends of Epping Forest scrutinises and, where necessary, comments on or objects to planning applications. What are the criteria which lead us to take that action?

Firstly, our reasons are never based on personal value judgements concerning style or taste. Those are matters for communities and neighbourhoods – unless, perhaps, if something universally regarded as outlandish were in view of the Forest. To justify our intervention, a proposal must directly affect the Forest or, if granted, would indicate a shift in planning policy which would be detrimental to the Forest if widely applied.

The land surrounding Epping Forest is subjected to intense development pressure all along its 203.5 kilometre boundary. We should all be immensely grateful for the Epping Forest Act of 1878, which affords the Forest the highest form of protection – but this applies only to Forest land (including outlying areas such as Galley Hill Wood), not to Buffer Land or the privately or publicly owned land surrounding the Forest. For the control of encroaching or inappropriate development, Epping Forest is dependent on planning policy implemented by Local Planning Authorities. In particular we rely on them to uphold Green Belt Policy. So it is important that we are always aware of local and regional plans and comment on consultations arising from them – and that we keep abreast of the work of the London Green Belt Council, of which we are a member.

Of all local authority areas in England, Epping Forest District Council has the third highest proportion of Green Belt, 90 per cent of its area. To date, it has been staunch in defence of the Green Belt but, under pressure from national government, in 2012 it was forced to state, “there will have to

be some release of Green Belt...to meet the needs for housing and employment growth...”

This erosion has begun in areas which have long given us reason for concern.

In our Summer 2015 *Newsletter*, Tricia Moxey wrote about “the corridors that make all the difference”, highlighting the importance of linking habitats with green corridors of hedges, verges, and the small strips of woodland, known locally as shaws, which are characteristic of the Corporation's vital Buffer Lands. We have stressed many times the importance of maintaining continuity between the Forest and the Lea Valley Park and between the northern edges of the Forest and the farmland beyond. But planning pressure along the Sewardstone Road and in the Church Road/Lippitts Hill area of High Beach increases yearly.

Larger developments (for example, 79 dwellings close to Buffer Lands and accessible to M25 and Central Line via Forest roads; 16 houses on the Sewardstone Road) are a clear issue, but what of the individual who wants a desirable family house in a Forest location?

What follows is not a specific case history but a composite of a number of actual examples. Imagine to begin with a 19th-century cottage, probably built for an agricultural labourer, a picket fence and roadside verge fronting the Forest, with a mixed hedge separating the garden from the field behind.

After the house has been enlarged and “brought into the 21st century”, a six-foot brick wall surrounds the manicured garden, barring the red-legged partridges, hedgehogs and toads which used to pass between the hedgerow and the Forest. Highways Division requirements have necessitated widening the gateway, so the verge has gone. Both parents have vehicles and soon the teenagers will follow suit (there being no bus) and as there are no street lights, it is necessary ►



The view from Galleyhill Wood: the land around the Forest is under intense development pressure. Photo Peter Wrobel.

► to surround the house with security lights – all night. Hard luck on the invertebrates, the birds and the bats. The compost heap has gone (sorry grass snakes) but the Forest is a handy substitute and those Michaelmas daisies will look pretty over there.

That may be an extreme example (although true in all its parts) and not everyone moves into the countryside intending to urbanise their patch but if every slightly run-down house, dated bungalow, disused stable or redundant-by-design barn is allowed to be developed, we risk losing those vital links between Forest and countryside. This is why when we consider a planning application adjacent to the Forest we look at light pollution; sound pollution; increased traffic on Forest roads; destruction of roadside flora and fauna; and drainage issues and visual intrusion.

When we are dealing with straightforward Green Belt issues, we generally find ourselves in accord with the recommendations of council officers. If a decision is put before a committee of elected councillors, for example the unsuccessful application for 19 houses at Forest Lodge, one objector is permitted to speak. This is usually a resident, or a representative for a group of residents who are affected by the plan. In the case of Forest Lodge, the Conservators were also called to state their case. Other objectors are noted, and their written submissions will have been available to the Planning Committee. We would like to think that a carefully reasoned argument, echoing but independent of the official Forest position, together with attendance in the chamber and the strength of the size of our membership, makes a worthwhile contribution to the planning process.

It has been made clear to us that we cannot cite precedence as a reason for objection – and it is becoming increasingly apparent that where one breach of the Green Belt is permitted, others will follow.

We pick up on matters for concern by reading the Weekly Planning Lists published by Local Planning Authorities online and summarised in the local press. Sometimes it requires intimate knowledge of an area to realise that a plan could affect the Forest, which is where Friends' members can be invaluable. We cannot take up neighbourhood issues, only those which affect the Forest, but I would urge you to be vigilant and contact us if an application or planning strategy

gives you cause for concern. We particularly appreciate help in the areas covered by Waltham Forest and Redbridge Councils. It is also illuminating to watch the webcasts of council planning meetings.

We often remind Local Planning Authorities that, by controlling the area around the Forest, they are guardians of it. They must avoid the temptation to see the Forest as an adjunct or substitute for their own provision of open space for recreational activities, thereby putting stress on the other facet of the Epping Forest Act and the very essence of the Forest we all love, the natural aspect.

Sue McKinley

.....
MYSTERY QUIZ

What bird lines its nest with mud and lays these pale blue spotted eggs? (Photos and quiz by Ken Hoy)

Answer on page 11



WALK REPORTS

Debden Green to Dulsmead (Sunday 24 January 2016)

We were privileged to be allowed to start and finish our walk in the grounds of Debden House. The name Debden is thought to be derived from the old English word “dene”, hence deep valley. The name also appears a few miles away as “Debden Slade”, the valley that runs down to the north east of Loughton. Debden House and its associated campsite are a remnant of the former estate of Debden Hall, itself a very old enclosure from the Forest dating back to the 13th century.



Vibrant moss contrasts with leaf litter. Photo Diana Watmough.

Crossing the campsite we entered the Forest and almost immediately crossed an ancient “wood-bank” which marks the boundary between manors of Loughton and Theydon. This bank also denoted the boundary of a wood, part of the Birch Hall estate, which was itself an old enclosure from the Forest. We climbed through the wood, which has once again become part of the Forest, to obtain excellent views across another purchase from the estate, the Deer Sanctuary.

Cutting down across the open fields that the Conservators use to grow hay as feed for the Sanctuary deer, we once again entered the Forest. The hills that once marked this edge of the Forest were earlier distinguished by tall un-pollarded beech trees. Regrettably, the great storms of the late 1980s and since have felled most of them, but natural regeneration is ensuring that successors are well on the way.

Heading northwards we came to Oak Hill. Enclosed in the 1850s, it became a clay pit and then was extensively planted up with sweet chestnut and rhododendrons. In 1889 those two great benefactors, the Buxton brothers, purchased this area so that it could become Forest once again. Management of alien species such as the rhododendrons is a problem for the Conservators because of their link to diseases which could have a dramatic effect on the high beech woodland. No doubt the Conservators will have to address this challenge.

Cutting across to the Ditches Ride we were pleased to have reached the top of this section of the Forest. As we followed the slope back to our start, we saw the effect of human action. Misguided re-pollarding which killed the ancient oaks on

Hatgate Plain and the Second World War anti-tank ditch left scars which nature will eventually cover. But it reminds us that human intervention can come at a cost and should only be done as an exception and after very careful and informed consideration.

By the time we got back, we had been reminded that exploration across deep valleys takes one into beautiful and little visited parts of the Forest, but is not for the faint-hearted!

Peter Adams

Bluehouse Grove and the River Ching (24 March 2016)

On a chilly and overcast morning 28 walkers turned up to join me on a walk through one of the less well visited parts of the Forest. Surprisingly many of those present lived close by but had rarely walked this area. Leaving the main road behind us we stopped to admire a wonderful sculptural hornbeam close to the bank of the River Ching, formerly known as the Bourne. Walking up a gentle but very muddy incline we entered the ancient coppiced area of Bluehouse Grove. This woodland and that of Hatch Grove were added to the Forest in 1941.

Crossing the ancient wood bank we paused as Pat Andrews produced a number of copies of old maps which showed the extent of these early enclosed managed woods. She explained the past ownership by successive Lords of the Manor and their function for the supply of fuel. The woodland floor was carpeted with emerging native bluebells. A number of young yews now intermingle with the hollies, forming an understory beneath the taller hornbeams.

The misty view towards the tall buildings of London glimpsed from corner of Bluehouse Road reminded us of why Epping Forest is referred to as London’s Green Lung. Wandering through Hatch Grove we discussed the impact of nutrient enrichment from dogs on the flora of the area.



Sculptural hornbeams on the banks of the Ching. Photo Graham Cook.

In the sheltered valley alongside the Ching, bud burst was slightly more advanced, indicating that in spite of the recent drop in temperature, spring was indeed on the way. Walking beside this meandering river there is a feeling of being in a remote wilderness, and the flash of the brilliant white feathers of one of the resident little egrets only added to this feeling of being far away from civilisation.

Tricia Moxey ➤

► **Spring Migrants on Wanstead Flats** (Sunday 17 April 2016)

Tim Harris welcomed 36 enthusiastic naturalists on a slightly chilly spring morning to see and hear some of the birds on Wanstead Flats. The group included some novices as well as more experienced birders who were happy to encourage everyone to observe as many species as possible. A quick check on the wildfowl on Jubilee Pond enabled the group to see the usual mix of birds including mute swans, Canada geese, black-headed gulls and mallards. Large numbers of feral pigeons and carrion crows feed regularly around Jubilee Pond. Several pairs of crows were observed building nests in the tops of the nearby plane trees.



Searching for the song thrush. Photo Kathy Hartnett.

A lone willow warbler was lurking in some bushes, but was upstaged by noisy greenfinches nearby. Common and lesser whitethroats, recently arrived back from Africa, gave short bursts of their scratchy songs from within some scrubby vegetation. Everyone was able to appreciate several minutes of the melodious song from a song thrush as he declared his territory from a branch. The yaffle call of a green woodpecker was heard as he flew across the short mown sward on this part of the Flats.

There were sightings of the resident pair of kestrels and several very noisy magpies chasing each other around. A number of robins and blackbirds were heard singing and a

chiffchaff was seen, although sadly he remained silent! A small group of starlings were observed busy feeding in some bushes.

There were sightings of meadow pipits on the tops of gorse bushes and a glimpse of a pair of house martins as they swooped over our heads. The highlight was a lone singing skylark which ascended high into the sky then plummeted downwards to disappear among the long grass.

As usual, Tim was able to explain the finer points of bird identification, and all enjoyed their visit to this part of the Forest.

Tricia Moxey

Exploring Honeylane Quarters and Beyond (24 March 2016)

Meeting at the Wake Valley Pond car park, 17 walkers joined us on a beautiful sunny Saturday. Heading north from the car park, we passed first through the “barrier” that borders the western side of the A104 road from Ranger’s Road to the Wake Arms to restrain any cattle from straying onto the road.

We then came out onto Sunshine Plain, which on this day lived up to its name. This heathland supports two species of “heather”, though we were too early to see them in flower. At the edge of the Plain, we viewed a fine specimen pollarded beech that was probably several hundred years old.

We soon reached the Verderer’s Ride and headed south towards the “Big View”. From there, we could see Waltham Abbey and the northern Forest, along with the M25 and further west the News International printing works.

Crossing the top of Claypit Hill, we soon arrived at High Beach. Historically an earlier recreation hot spot in the Forest, it remains very popular today, as the number of visitors present when we arrived confirmed. From the pillow mounds at the top of the “Beach”, we could just see Waltham Abbey tower through a dip in the trees.

We passed on by Epping Forest Visitor Centre at High Beach, now operated by the Friends for the Conservators. Judy Adams reminded us that she was looking to increase the team of volunteer Info Assistants and that offers to help would be welcomed.

Joining the Easy Access Trail, we headed back to our starting point. Along the way, we enjoyed superb views of Wake Valley Pond and took a brief pause to soak up the atmosphere.

Ron and Pat Andrews



Sunshine Plain near the Wake Arms – for once living up to its name. Photo Ron Andrews.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Sunday 12 June 10:30 am – 12:30 pm

Monks in the Forest

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

Saturday 18 June 7.00 pm – 9.00 pm

A Midsummer Evening Walk

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

Sunday 3 July 10:00 am – 1:00 pm

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

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

..... MYSTERY QUIZ: THE ANSWER

This nest was built by a song thrush. Their nests are always mud-lined and contain pale blue spotted eggs. Blackbirds also line their nest with a layer of mud but they then line the mud with a second inner layer of grass; their eggs are greenish and finely speckled with pale brown.



This is a blackbird's nest, for comparison.

Photo Ron Andrews.



Sunday 10 July 10:30 am – 12:30 pm

A Wander round Swaines Green for Summer Flowers and Insects

Join Tricia Moxey and Martin McCleary. Meet at the Lower Swaines entrance close to Epping Primary School. There is limited parking in Lower Swaines or Coronation Hill at the end of St John's Rd Epping. CM16 5ES. Grid ref: TL456026

Saturday 16 July 11:00 am – 3:00 pm

Discovering Epping Forest Event

Based at High Beach. Working with Epping Forest Field Centre and the Epping Forest Centenary Trust, this promises to be a fun day full of activities especially for families. See the Friends website for details: www.friendsofeppingforest.org.uk.

Wednesday 20 July 7:00 pm

Annual General Meeting

See AGM notice at the end of the Annual Review, page iv.

Sunday 24 July 10:30 am – 12:30 pm

Discovering Copped Hall Estate's Wildlife

Local biologist and wildlife photographer Peter Warne will share his love and knowledge of the wildlife in and around Copped Hall Estate in Epping Forest. Meet at Lodge Road Car Park, off the Epping New Road (B1393), north of the Wake Arms Roundabout (Miller and Carter). Grid ref: TQ431998

Sunday 11 September 9:00 am – 5:00 pm

The Annual Epping Forest Centenary Walk

Walk the entire length of Epping Forest in the day or take part in one of the local sections of the long walk. Celebrate how lucky we are to have Epping Forest! For more details, see page 5, contact 020 8418 0730 or visit www.friendsofeppingforest.org.uk

Thursday 6 October 10:30 am – 12:30 pm

Knighton Woods

Come and join local historian Georgina Green for a walk exploring Knighton Woods, with exotic trees planted when it was the garden of the home of Edward North Buxton, and Lords Bushes with some colourful native trees. Meet at Forest car park, Knighton Woods, Knighton Lane, Buckhurst Hill IG9 5HQ. Grid ref: TQ407936

FOREST SUPPER

Thursday 24 November 2016

Chingford Assembly Hall, Station Road, Chingford E4 7EN (7.00 for 7.30pm)



potato and chives, Mediterranean pasta, oriental rice and mixed green salad. Hot buttered potatoes and crusty French bread and butter.

This will be followed by profiteroles with chocolate sauce or tropical fresh fruit salad with cream. Coffee /tea with mints will follow. Vegetarian meals are available on request.

Wine and soft drinks are included, along with table quizzes about the Forest (no mobile phones for assistance!) and sales goods including Christmas cards.

We hope to see you at our annual get together this year, with catering provided by Alan Beere Catering.

It is a ticket only event, so please apply soon to ensure you get a place. Tables seat up to 10 people.

Join us for a home-cooked cold meat platter, with roast Norfolk turkey, gammon ham, roast loin of pork, and poached Scottish salmon, accompanied by coleslaw and

And please donate a gift for the raffle. The response has been very generous each year and it helps to raise funds for the Friends.

Please complete the booking form below and send with your payment **and S.A.E.** to: Hazel Shukla at 6 Knighton Drive, Woodford Green, Essex IG8 0NY by 10 November.

REMEMBER – ADMISSION BY TICKET ONLY

2016 FOREST SUPPER BOOKING FORM

Please provide ticket(s) @ £27.00 each (please list all names below) for the Forest Supper to be held on 24 November 2016 at Chingford Assembly Hall, Station Road, Chingford, E4 7EN:

.....

I would like, if possible, to be seated with (full name please):.....

Please tell us of any special dietary needs, naming the relevant person/s.

NameTelephone No.....

Address.....

I enclose my payment of £..... (cheques made payable to Friends of Epping Forest).

Please return your completed Booking Form, payment and SAE by 12 November to: Hazel Shukla, 6 Knighton Drive, Woodford Green, IG8 0NY.

Bring your ticket with you on the night – there is a prize for the winning ticket number!

Don't forget to enclose a stamped self-addressed envelope!