



ASHDOWN FOREST VOLUNTEERS NEWSLETTER

Dear Volunteers

Issue 2, Summer 2008

Welcome to issue two of the Volunteers Newsletter!! I hope you enjoyed the last issue and thank you for all your feedback! Please continue to make comments, suggestions and contributions!

Information Barn Volunteers - What's new!

Handbag security - a small locker is now in the radio room to help keep your bags safe, the key is attached to the till keys and we have a spare in the office.

Credit Card Machine - so far, so good! The machine has been working well and as many of you have found out it is very easy to use. If you still haven't had a go, let us know and we will show you how it works. Takings have been increasing and we can even do riding permits! There has been one problem involving a PIN number - but it was correctly resolved!

Exhibitions - the spring time nature table was very popular and a big THANK YOU to Anne and Janet for all their help! The current exhibition will go on right through the summer. The wood turners, who enjoyed themselves immensely, want to come back for Christmas but it would be nice to have something in between! Ros and Tracy were thinking of something on hibernation and migration - any suggestions?

The AV Unit - little fingers (and big ones for that matter) like to fiddle with the channel and volume controls on the right hand side of the AV screen! These are very sensitive and it doesn't take much to alter the settings (or fix them again). The controls are volume ↑ and ↓. These are also the buttons to use if you find the volume too loud. Gently touch the slightly embossed arrows - your progress is shown on the screen. If the channel has been changed try lightly pressing the input button that changes the viewing 'mode'!

Wool - we now have our very own, limited edition, Hebridean knitting wool for sale. It's mixed with a little Alpaca to make a lovely soft yarn. It was expensive to produce - hence the price (£11.00) and once this batch is sold there is no more! There is also a sack of fleece in the barn (at 50p per bag). It's good for hanging baskets and for keeping slugs off new growth. It also makes good compost - it is a bit smelly so it has been moved as far from the till as possible.

What's On!

CONSERVATION GROUP
29th June and as usual the last Sunday of the month. Meet at the Centre car-park at 10.15.

SUMMER PARTY
Please join us at the Summer BBQ - outdoors if the weather is good on Thursday 10th July 19.00 for 19.30 - all volunteers very welcome, please let us know you are coming!

STITCH N' BITCH
Our monthly needlecraft group meets 1st Tuesday of the month from 19.00 until we run out of things to say or do! Meet at the Forest Centre

For the most up to date information on what's going on why not visit our website

www.ashdownforest.org/news



East Grinstead Volunteering Day

We had a very attractive stand at the above event on 25th April. Rich and Tracy were there the first day and Anne and Pat on the second day. It was a great chance to promote the Forest to the public and we met lots of really interesting people - some of whom signed up to volunteer (and a few have already started training in the Information Barn).

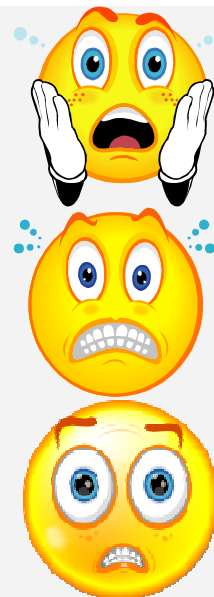
Roman invasion!

29th May saw a very strange sight at the Forest Centre - a fully armed Roman legionnaire! Lexicus Deanicus came along to chat to children and parents about life in the Roman army and what the Romans got up to on the Forest. We have had some really positive feedback and in total 124 visitors took part!



TILL TERROR!!

I know, through talking to you and reading your diary entries, that there have been having some horrid problems with the till again. The codes shown allow you to find out the exact cause of the problem in the manual and how to fix it. I have had a conversation with the suppliers and discussed the problems with them and I hate to say it, they think it is operator error (eek!). Just in case it is mechanical I have a new hand scanner just to see if that resolves things. Top tips from the supplier are - remember to place the scanner squarely on the bar code, then depress the button, await the till to make its beep then release the button. Do not drag the scanner over the bar code whilst depressing the button, - that's how multiple entries happen! Make sure when you lift the scanner from the bar code you lift it up and away and not over - again this can cause multiple entries! You can void the last item and the whole sale if you need to (and start again) by following the simple instructions on the front of the green book. The key is DON'T PANIC!



✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ SHEARING DAY ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂

Despite the truly hideous weather and the fact the sheep were just too wet to shear (a great disappointment for Louise who really wanted to get the job done) the day was a great success!! We had 130+ people meeting the sheep and visiting the barn. The sheep were rather snug, but a bit bored, in the tractor shed, however, being hand fed sheep nuts was a consolation! The ladies of the Guild of Spinners Weavers and Dyers enjoyed the event too. Most importantly a great big THANK YOU to Gwen, Anne and the two Johns for their much needed help! For more details the sheep blog, <http://www.ashdownforest.org/blog.php>

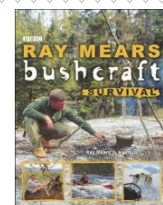
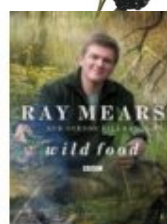
New Barn Stock

We are always on the look-out for new and interesting things for the barn - particularly books. So far have 'Teashop Walks in East Sussex', 'Walks for Fitness in East Sussex' (so you can walk off your cream tea!) the classic 'Food for Free' by Richard Mabey and two books by local outdoor hero Ray Mears - 'Bushcraft' and 'Wild Food'. If you should come across any interesting, unusual or exciting items in other visitor centres or shops, that you think would do well for us, please make a note of the product name (title, author and the ISBN number for books) - and we will have a look and see what we can do (at a reasonable price of course!)

© Collins gem

Food for Free

A fantastic feast of plants and folklore



"The WagLog #2" (More adventures of a Scallywag)

I hope you enjoyed The WagLog #1. As usual "him indoors" took all the credit for it. Actually, it was almost WagLog #1 and only - I could have been a goner before the second episode of my adventures was published.

Well, as you know, I do like chasing sticks (a lot). One evening when we were 'helping' the fire brigade put out the big arson fire behind Long car park, one of the firemen was throwing me a nice big stick. Unfortunately the stick I was chasing stuck in the ground like a javelin and I ran onto it. As I'm sure you've seen, I am very fast and the stick went into the back of my throat. It went straight through my soft palate (whatever that is) and almost pierced my nasal cavity - OUCH!

So, the next day we're off to the vets in Forest Row again (3rd time this year). They love me in there - even though I put my paws on the counter and knocked leaflets and business cards all over the floor. The vet said I would need to have a general anaesthetic and lots of stitches. I wasn't very impressed that my dad left me there on my own so I cried and howled all day so they'd want to get rid of me a.s.a.p. My dad came to pick me up in the afternoon, my throat was really sore - partly 'cos of the stitches and partly 'cos I'd howled for hours. Also I still felt very weird and unsteady after the anaesthetic - I was moving like a newborn fawn.

So I'm not supposed to chase sticks anymore. My dad now has a collection of balls, Frisbees and other assorted toys for me, but I still like sticks the best. When he's not looking I sneak out of the office and get anyone who's around (especially kids) to throw sticks for me until I get so hot I have to jump in the pond and go for a swim. Hew says the pond is full of really rare newts - not if I've got anything to do with it! There's only one downside - the mud at the bottom of the pond is really stinky. I like it, but everyone in the office complains about the smell - even Tracy doesn't like me as much when I'm "bog-water boy". If you're on duty when I am - don't forget I

like kisses and treats. X Scallywag 

Conservation Group

I hope the Conservation Group is still 'out there'! Our April and May sessions had to be cancelled for (my) personal reasons and because of the bank holiday so I am gearing up for June! At this time of year we can't do the rhodo bashing we're (all?) so fond of, nor can we carry on pushing back the bamboo curtain down at the Vachery. But what about those masses of tree tubes that we've removed from their trees over the last couple of years and are now heaped forlornly along the rides in the Vachery woods? We'll have a go at this on the 29th and go to our favourite spot for lunch under one of the new redstart nest boxes. See you outside the Centre at 1015! Hew



A very warm welcome to all our new information volunteers currently in training: Paul Lawrence and Suzy Ainley and to those hopefully about to start: Keith Williamson, Janet Mercy, Sam Bryant, Odette Barry, Lisa Joice and Carol Anderson. Finally a special welcome back to Rob Harrison who has recently rejoined the team!

Ashdown Forest Volunteers- what exactly do they do?

This question was posed at the recent East Grinstead road show and it got both Rich and me thinking - just what is our expectation from our volunteers? Obviously the Ranger and Info volunteers have some cross-over but they are also very different roles.

Volunteer Rangers - often described as the 'eyes and the ears' of the Forest at the weekend! The duties are - not in any particular order - being an identifiable presence on the Forest to assist the public, & help them to enjoy their visit, to explain the Conservators' policies on Forest management, to assist the duty ranger respond to emergencies like deer collisions, forest fires, traffic control or dangerous trees, and to **inform** visitors when they are breaking any of the byelaws (e.g. riding without permits, mountain biking or barbecues etc.). Volunteer rangers are not expected to **enforce** byelaws - if you find someone breaking a byelaw who does not desist when informed (very rarely) you should call the duty ranger who can take appropriate action. Encroachments or parking on the Forest around properties are often complicated and long-running sagas that are best dealt with by the chase rangers - we don't expect volunteers to take flak from irate home owners - that's what we are paid for! If you do find what you think is an encroachment or parking on the Forest around a property anywhere on the Forest, please inform the duty ranger or make a note in the diary for the chase ranger to deal with. If you are unsure where this leaves you - chat to Rich or the duty ranger.

Information Volunteer - the first point of contact for many a visitor! Assisting the public, & helping them to enjoy their visit and explaining, if asked, the Conservators' policies on Forest management. As with the volunteer rangers we don't expect you to enter into arguments about the rights and wrongs of tree felling policies! Anyone who has detailed questions or who cannot be satisfied by your answers should be given the office number - and we will deal with their queries! If needed the duty ranger can be called to assist.

Other stuff.....

Winter Opening Hours

This winter we will trial routinely closing the information barn at 16.00, I'm sure many of you will find this welcome in the darker winter months. How would you feel about opening at 13.00 rather than 14.00? Let me know!

Stuffed animals

They need a clean! I am seeking advice on repair and cleaning from the Booth Museum before I start (I don't want them to be any more threadbare!) and they will be done this year!

HLF Bid

This is slowly moving forward behind the scenes - but nothing much will happen until 2009 at the earliest. Watch this space!

Are the Sheep Out?

I will try to make sure if the sheep are out it gets moved on the map - should be a little easier now we have a shepherding assistant - so I don't have to pester Louise!

Notice Board

Anne Smith has kindly offered to help look after the notice board and she and I will get to grips with it very soon.