

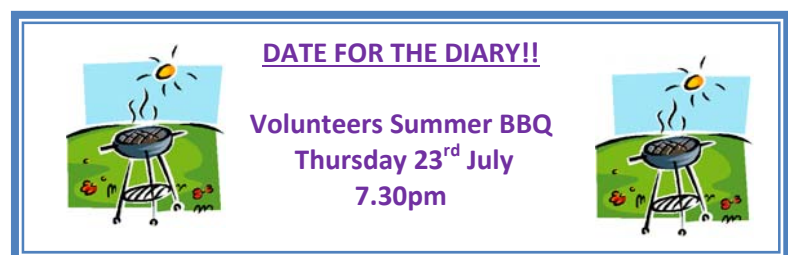


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The Newsletter for all Ashdown Forest Volunteers

Volunteers Coffee Morning - Thank you to all those who attended the Coffee Morning on 17th March. This was a chance to get up to date with what is happening on the Forest, including the invisible fencing trial currently taking place and the new Code of Conduct for dog walkers that was hot off the press! If those of you who were not able to attend have any questions about these new developments please do get in touch with the office. Look out for the next Coffee morning - it's open to all volunteers, so please do come along and have a cuppa - the biscuits were very delicious last time!



Pop-up Café – The pop-up café returned over the Easter weekend. Although the poor weather meant the first couple of days were quiet, but with the arrival of the sunshine the cake was flying out of the door and all the cake sold out!

Due to the refurbishment of the Education Barn the café wasn't held over the May Day bank holiday but was back again for the 23rd – 25th May and proved popular once again. Fingers crossed for the sun will make a welcome appearance over the August bank holiday! A rota will soon be going up in the Radio Room so please do put your name down if you would like to help out.

Sheep Proof your Dog.....

The popular Sheep Proof your Dog training session was held again at the National Cats Protection Centre on 7th May and all the 20 minute slots were quickly booked up. The sun made an appearance and all attendees went away happy. We hope to run the training again later in the year and the date will be advertised once confirmed. Many thanks to Di and Rob Bright and Julia Fairhall for helping out on the day – hopefully you managed to get a spare moment to sample some of the scummy cakes on offer in the café!



Sheep Proof your Dog trainer Tobin Bird in action

Rhubarb custard tarts...

With the rain currently lashing against the office windows let's bring a bit of sunshine with these little tarts.

– *Makes 12*

1. Make the custard: pour the milk into a saucepan. Slice the vanilla pod in half lengthways, scrape out the seeds with the point of a knife then add them, together with the pod, to the milk. Bring to the boil, then immediately remove from the heat and leave the vanilla to infuse
2. Beat together the caster sugar, egg yolks and cornflour, then pour in the milk and mix thoroughly, removing the empty vanilla pod. Wipe the saucepan, then pour in the custard and warm over a moderate heat, stirring almost continuously, till the sauce feels thick and heavy on the spoon. Remove from the heat and set aside
3. Chop the rhubarb into short, cork-length pieces, place them in a shallow pan, add the caster sugar and orange juice then leave to cook over a low heat for 10 minutes or until they are soft, but still hold their shape.
4. Roll out the pastry to a rectangle approximately 40cm in length and 30cm wide, turning it with the longest side towards you. Taking the right-hand edge, roll the pastry up to form a short, tight roll, then slice into 12 discs. Place each piece of pastry on the work surface and press or roll out, using a little flour if necessary, so they will neatly cover the base and sides of each of the buns tins.
5. Set the oven at 200C/gas mark 6. Line the bun tins with the pastry, then fill each with a square of greaseproof paper and baking beans or with a ball of crumpled kitchen foil and bake for 12-15 minutes till the pastry is dry and lightly crisp. Lower the oven heat to 160C/gas mark 3.

Ingredients

- 2 short sticks of rhubarb
- 2-3 tbsp caster sugar
- Juice of 1 orange
- 300g puff pastry

For the custard filling

- 350ml milk
- 1 vanilla pod
- 60g caster sugar
- 3 egg yolks
- 15g cornflour



Taken from The Guardian website

6. Remove the paper and beans or foil, fill each case with custard then add 2 or 3 pieces of cooked rhubarb to each. Return the tarts to the oven and bake for 30-35 minutes till the custard is lightly set. Remove from the heat, leave to settle for a few minutes then carefully remove from the tins with a palette knife, spoon a tablespoon of rhubarb syrup over each and leave to cool.

BIRD REPORT

Dawn Chorus Bird Walk..... The first bird walk of 2015 was on 25th April from Chelwood Gate and despite the rain which got steadier as the walk progressed, they managed to hear and see over 30 types of birds plus a shrew! The exciting news was not only did the group hear a male Cuckoo singing, but they also all had lovely clear views of him flying over the heath near the Old Airstrip. Those who attended the second walk from Stonehill on 9th May also caught sight and sound of a cuckoo and there were also good views of two Kestrels and a Woodlark (30 bird species in all seen) plus a Roe Deer (very unusual) and over 20 Fallow Deer.



Dawn Chorus walkers - Stonehill

On the trail of the Ashdown Forest Cuckoos..... We've been keeping a close eye on the progress of Ash and Chester as they travel north from their winter residence in the Congo and Gabon. Ash returned to the Forest on 25th April, while Chester stayed in southern Spain until 10th May before completing the final leg back to the Forest in a single day.

Tit cam..... Blue Tits once again nested in the bird box which has a live feed to the Information Barn. Nine eggs were laid and hatched. The parents were busy flying in and out with food and we thought all was going well but then we spotted one morning that there was no movement in the nest. As that is a 3rd year in a row that the brood hasn't survived we might look into whether the box needs to be relocated.



SUMMER 2015 - ASHDOWN FOREST EVENTS.....

The Education Team are holding a number of event over the summer:

* Tuesday 21st July and Tuesday 18th August - Parent and Toddler sessions *

10am -12noon

A fun hands on session for toddlers and their carers to explore the natural world of the Ashdown Forest

* Sunday 26th July - Archaeology Walk *

Join us to hunt for clues to discover how people have used these woods in the past and shaped how it looks today. We hope to explore pillow mounds, ancient routeways and boundary markers. A short circular walk approximately 2.5 miles suitable for families with children over 7 years.

The meeting point will be Ridge Car Park, Colemans Hatch Road, Ashdown Forest.

Booking essential - email education@ashdownforest.org

£2.50 per family

Monday 27th – Wednesday 29th July - Holiday Play Scheme

10am - 3.30pm each day

A chance to discover the wild side of Ashdown Forest with woodland skills, fun outdoors games, trails and trails, den building, woodland cooking, stories and lots more.

£75 per child

To book a place please email education@ashdownforest.org

Clerk's News...

Hello everyone!

Old news now but I am looking forward to my retirement at the end of July. It seems such a short time ago that I joined the "firm" yet there have been so many changes in the last 20+ years. Although the work of the Forest is cyclical, I can truly say that no two days in the office have been the same. Visitors to the office often say how lucky we are to work in such lovely surroundings, and this is true. Where else would you spend your working day with mud on the floor, dogs nudging your elbow for biscuits, the odd bat/bird/butterfly to get excited about and oh, so many other things? I've loved almost every minute – perhaps not the stress of end of year accounts but the people more than make up for this. I have had laughs galore and will miss it all I am sure but with new people come new ideas and this can only be good. Exciting times are ahead for the Visitor Centre and I shall watch from a distance as things progress. The new Countryside Stewardship Scheme will mean changes on the Forest too but we can be certain that the Forest will always be here, for us and everyone else to enjoy.

PS I am going to take my mug home and deep clean it!!!!

ROS

The exciting addition of another Scheduled Monument on Ashdown Forest.....

In England the Department for Culture, Media and Sport keeps a register, or schedule, of nationally important sites which receive state protection; this now includes over 31,000 sites. In England the government body with responsibility for archaeology and the historic environment is English Heritage.

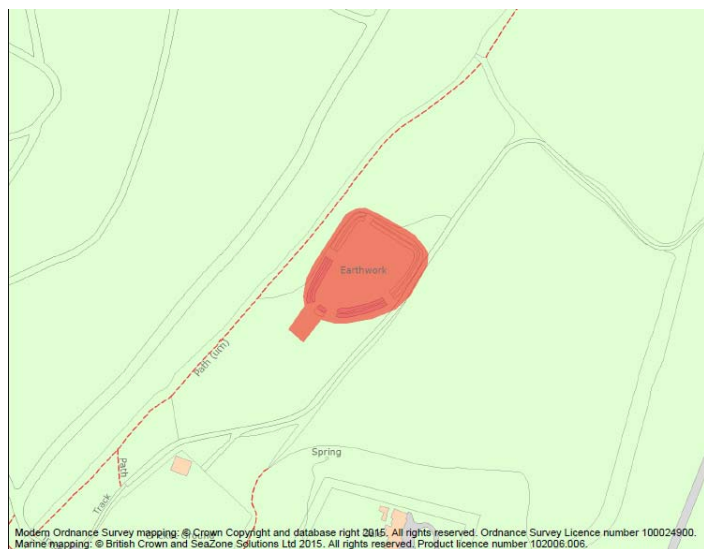
Scheduling affords great protection as it becomes illegal to undertake a great range of works within a designated area, without 'scheduled monument consent'. Ashdown Forest already has a number of Scheduled Monuments and in February we received the news that an area of land in Chelwood Gate has now been added to the Schedule of Monuments. English Heritage have identified that this area of land contained a late Iron Age enclosure with associated earthworks.

Iron Age enclosed farmsteads are generally represented by curvilinear enclosures containing evidence of a small group of circular domestic buildings and associated agricultural structures. Where excavated, these sites are also found to contain pits or rectangular post-built structures for the storage of grain and other produce, evidence of an organised and efficient farming system. The surrounding enclosures would have provided protection against wild animals, cattle rustling and tribal raiding. In central and southern England, most enclosed Iron Age farmsteads are situated in areas which are now under intensive arable cultivation.



Artistic impression of an Iron Age enclosure

The area of Ashdown Forest lay within an extensive and sparsely-populated area of woodland, known during the Anglo-Saxon period as 'Andredes weald'. Rev Edward Turner, writing in 1862, reported that the Chelwood Gate enclosure was known locally as 'Dane's Churchyard', after a tradition that it was the burial place for Danes slaughtered at a battle with the Saxons. After the Norman Conquest, Ashdown Forest became a deer hunting park. A northeast-southwest aligned ridge and furrow has been recorded in the area immediately adjacent to the enclosure indicating that it was under partial cultivation in the medieval and/or post-medieval periods. During the post-medieval period, parallel drainage ditches were dug on the site, producing iron slag, pottery and clay pipe.



Map showing the location and shape of the enclosure

The monument was first investigated in 1860 by the Sussex Archaeological Society with negative results. The upstanding earthworks were first recorded on the 1956 revision of the Ordnance Survey mapping. Excavations of 1985-88 by the Garden Hill Excavation Group suggested several phases of occupation. Thin scatters of Mesolithic flints suggest intermittent activity on the site in the Mesolithic period, while furrows underlying the earthworks suggest that the site was cultivated prior to the construction of the enclosure. The settlement seems to have been established in the Late Iron Age, its occupants engaged in a mixed farming economy. The enclosure earthworks are situated in a non-defensive position and probably delineate a settlement area perhaps equivalent to a farmstead.

Three phases of Late Iron Age activity were suggested by the 1980s excavators. Phase 1 comprised a small enclosure delimited by pallsades and overlying earlier cultivation furrows. The enclosure contained at least one round house and evidence of iron smelting. Eastern Atrebatic pottery was also found. During Phase 2 the enclosure was strengthened with a bank and ditch. Phase 3 consisted of a ditch being dug across the entrance. Pits in the interior of the enclosure produced evidence of iron smelting activity and Eastern Atrebatic pottery. Chelwood Gate is one of three enclosures and possible field systems on Ashdown Forest, the other two located at King's Standing and Greenwood Gate. Further information on these can be found under the History section of our website (www.ashdownforest.org).

A scheduled Late Iron Age promontory hillfort lies some 2.8 km to the northeast at Garden Hill. It has been suggested that the enclosures represented farmsteads subordinate to and outlying Garden Hill, which may have functioned as a central place for control and redistribution. There is no evidence that occupation of the enclosure continued into the Romano-British period.

The English Heritage therefore listed the enclosed settlement at Chelwood Gate as a Scheduled Monument for the following principal reasons:

- * *Rarity*: it is a relatively rare survival of the Iron Age settlement and cultivation of the High Weald, then densely wooded and sparsely populated;
- * *Group value*: Chelwood Gate forms an extended group with three scheduled Iron Age monuments, and is of importance in understanding the nature and organisation of land use in the area;
- * *Survival / condition*: of upstanding earthworks and archaeological deposits which remain relatively untouched by later activity, and represent a comparatively rare survival in a national context;
- * *Potential*: the site contains buried archaeological and environmental deposits which have the potential to provide valuable evidence for the Iron Age occupation of the High Weald.

Further information regarding the Scheduled Monuments on Ashdown Forest can be found on the English Heritage website – www.englishheritage.org.uk

Countryside Teams news.....

News from my world as a Countryside Worker in the Countryside Team is that in the last month we have finished the repairs on the fencing that surrounds the Grazing Enclosure. We have also started litter picking all the road verges in Ashdown Forest which is not a task we are looking forward to with relish so peaking for myself I am trying to focus on the opportunity this task provides to have time wandering in Ashdown Forest and seeing interesting wildlife. Last year in fact, I found a lime green spider called *Micrommata viriscens* (which doesn't have an English name) which hitched a ride on the bottom of my bin bag!



Continuing on a wildlife point of view; Tree Pipits, Woodlark, Skylark, Chiffchaff and Willow Warbler (to name a few!) are singing away and this is a good time of year to see Green Tiger Beetles on the sandy rides.

There's going to be other wildlife highlights to come as the weather warms up and it is also only recently that we have stopped loading the wood fuelled boiler and as I'm writing this it is pouring with rain outside so it seems the weather is not without a sense of irony!



Update on Grazing.....from Caroline Fitzgerald...

The lambs have come.

Over on grazing we have been busy bringing the 2015 lamb crop into the world. As usual the Hebrideans have managed the job with very little intervention from us and now we have 100 lambs springing about. It was a lambing percentage of 138 which is fine for a conservation grazing flock. We have cut the number of ewes that we have lambed this year, because now we have enough sheep to graze our 100 acres. With lots of help from the Countryside Team we have managed to get 150 sheep out onto the heath already, as well as the cattle and ponies.

More volunteers are always welcome to help with the Stock Checking rota.

The WagLog #22 – “When I’m 64!”



Hi! I’m sure you’ve heard the sad news (well, sad for us anyway) that Ros is leaving us at the end of July (I can’t believe we celebrated her 65th birthday this week!). Ros doesn’t seem too sad that she’s retiring, even though I’m sure she’ll miss me a bit. I’ve known Ros nearly all my life and I will miss her very much. She always describes me as “my beautiful boy” and feeds me delicious treats. Sometimes she even drops her lunch on the floor for me (although rice cakes with hummus aren’t all that to be honest). My “dad” is gutted; he loves Ros’ sense of humour and colourful language!

On a brighter note, him indoors has recruited two new Volunteer Rangers – Rob Bright & Ash Payne. He tells me that both of them passed “the knowledge” with flying colours. My old mate Gerry (Lee) is also coming back as a Volunteer Ranger after he retired from the Forest a little while ago. I always liked Gerry and I think he had a soft spot for me too – he used to sneak me a bit of sammidge or samosa at lunchtimes. Unfortunately I won’t see much of the new recruits though, as I rarely work weekends these days.

*“If only my master was
as smart and as
handsome as me!”*



I had a fabulous holiday in North Norfolk (it’s the first time we’ve been there) at the beginning of March. We stayed in a gorgeous cottage on a farm and went out walking all day every day. We were really lucky that it hardly rained all week, but it was so windy that it took us twice as long to walk there as it did to walk back! One day we walked for six hours to Blakeney Point and back to see the Common and Grey Seals. It was worth it though - we bumped into over a hundred seals lying on the beach. Have you ever noticed how much a

seal with its head just above the water looks like me with their mottled grey faces and long whiskers? I managed to find a buoy that wasn’t attached to a rope or chain (I’ve been trying to free one from its moorings for years!) which I carried for miles. I slept very well that night! I think my favourite places were Wells-next-the-Sea and Holkham Bay. We walked for miles on the beach and in the dunes, paddled in the sea, all followed by a huge fish from the fish’n’chip shop on the beach! Happy days.



Love & kisses, Scallywag X

From the Director’s Chair...

In the last issue we said ‘goodbye’ to Tracy and ‘hello’ to Charlie; we now have another momentous ‘farewell’ – this time to Ros who will be retiring after 20+ years of invaluable and unstinting service at the heart of the organisation. I know many of you will want to see Ros before she goes so do check out the BBQ arrangements.

Another very busy period for all of us! Just to give you some idea, between October 2014 and April 2015 we issued 13 Licences and 127 permits; we had 25,775 Website hits, 7688 Blog hits, had 1234 Facebook friends and 2671 Twitter followers. We had 2450 visitors to the Information Barn (winter opening) and recorded 921.5 volunteer hours; the Education Team have hosted 6 schools on the Forest, delivered sessions in school to 120 children, held two holiday activity clubs and provided two teacher training twilight sessions....and that’s without the Winter work programmes undertaken by the Rangers, Countryside team and grazing programme and a host of other tasks!

I know many of you are interested in the Forest Centre development plans – as I write the insulation and glazing work in the Education Barn is nearing completion - it’s hard to believe that we may not have to be clothed in many layers including, at times, woolly hats and gloves for meetings over the winter months! Good news is that we’ve heard that the second planning application for updating the tractor shed and workshops has now been approved. What has been exciting though, during the application process, has been the discovery of Pillow Mounds on the edge of the site – we are talking to the County Archaeologist about their protection and hopefully to have some interpretation material for visitors in the future.

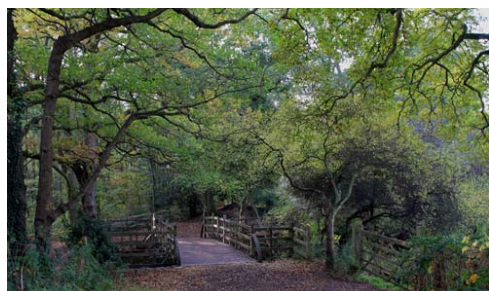
And finally, a BIG ‘thank you’ – your time, energy and commitment in supporting us is very much appreciated!

Pat

Events, Exhibitions, News and Reviews...

Bleau Shanay Hudson.....

Bleau Shanay Hudson is a local woodland artist and is inspired by trees and forests in our local area as well as places she finds on her travels. It is the somber beauty and majesty of trees that Bleau paints. Using a variety of mixed media and working mostly on canvas, Bleau focuses on the structure of trees and their branches, their starkness in winter scenes, as well as their magical and enchanting world she is captured within. Working within her Ashdown Forest studio, Bleau has been a self-taught artist after leaving college 8 years and continues to develop her creative career. Find out more by visiting www.woodland-art.com. The exhibition is running until 15th June 2015.



Craig Williams "Glimpses of the Forest".....

A photographer living on Ashdown Forest, Craig's landscapes capture the light and shade of the natural world, including the wildlife and macro images of the flora and places in view. For a glimpse of Craig's work visit his website www.craigwilliamsgallery.com. The exhibition will run from 22nd June to 31st October 2015.

There are still a few spaces on the Sunset Nightjar walks on the following dates....

- Saturday 27th June 2015
- Saturday 18th July 2015

There is a small charge of £2.50 per head. Binoculars will be helpful though not essential. Wear **sturdy boots** since some rough/uphill/downhill walking and country clothes please - no bright red/yellow/blue colours. A torch would be advisable as the walk ends in near darkness. Sorry no dogs. Weather-dependent - no walk if rain at the start of the walk. Meet 15 minutes prior to start of walk

Call the office to book a place or email conservators@ashdownforest.org and pay on the day. You will be advised of meeting point when booking.

Planning a party???.

If you are looking for a venue to hold an event the Education Barn can be hired during the week or weekend. So far this year we have had bookings for a child's birthday party, a family gathering and even a wedding reception! The kitchen is available for use along with the cutlery and crockery etc.



Contact the office if you would like to find out more information or check availability.

Conservation and Management News.....

Mike Payne, West Chase – Saturday 18th a forest fire burnt 2 hectares of heathland, this was unfortunate because the winter just gone had seen a contract in the area remove birch and pine scrub from a very good heather bank that we were trying to preserve. I am awaiting the end of the summer to see how the area recovers.

The Conservation Volunteers have restarted their work parties. The first 3 parties have been held in the Vachery along the gorge cutting back the woodland edge allowing light in and preventing the overgrowth of the gorge. The impact has been significant and extremely well received by all locals. The Conservation Volunteers are planning to continue their efforts in this area starting again in October. Hopefully later this summer I will be organising some working party days down the Vachery dealing with vegetation overgrowing the limestone rocks that comprise the gorge.

Bank holiday 4th May, Volunteer Ranger John Sharp was key to the interception and admonishment of two men riding motocross bikes around the Forest.

The Forest Countryside Team who had been working hard to stock proof areas of the Forest, for all manners of grazing, have now moved onto the Forest wide litter pick. Once this has been completed we will be looking into tidying all Forest furniture aka posts, barriers and signs etc. etc. etc.

People will have noticed the Code of Conduct signs have slowly been appearing over the Forest. I hope to have this task completed by the end of May

Mike Yates, North Chase – SE Water were made to carry out repairs to the Forest after using imported materials to backfill their excavations on the road verges, also United Grab Hire were made to repair damage to the Forest by their lorries again this resulted in them using imported topsoil. Natural England are quite strict about foreign material being used on the SSSI so we had to remove 9 tons of screened topsoil and sold it to a local resident for £350!

Residents in Tompsets Bank have been complaining all winter about the state of their access track which also happens to be a public bye way. We rectified this with a digger and some materials from a local builder who had to compensate for the damage done by his lorries to Tomsets Bank. Linton's Car Park has had a make over. Crawley Probation Service and ESCC Social Services Conservation Team are providing valuable man power including cutting logs for sale in the Barn, turf stripping the new wild flower meadow, repairing Broadstone Car Park and tidying up the Hotel verge. Forest wide rhododendron and Japanese Knotweed Spraying commences this month.

Rich Allum, South Chase – It's been a very busy time on the South Chase since the last newsletter. Woodwise Forestry cleared a huge number of young pine trees from the Old Lodge Valley / Garden of Eden, which looks fantastic. The Countryside Team and I worked really hard to complete all our in-house scrub clearance / tree thinning before the bird-nesting season – Lower Misbourne Farm, Spring Garden, Chestnut Farm and behind the Nutley Arms. Then we moved on to an exhaustive programme of fence repairs around the grazing enclosure in readiness for the Commoners' cattle and sheep to go back out on the Forest. Last weekend saw the first fatal dog attack on a sheep this year near Marl pits / Londonderry Farms; please be vigilant if you're out and about in the grazing area. We've also introduced some of our Hebridean sheep to a small enclosure near Upper Misbourne Farm, known as "Ardens".

Somehow we managed to escape with only a few small arson fires during the dry spell including a small one above Ellisons Pond - we were on tenterhooks for weeks! Currently we are undertaking ride repairs etc. with the digger – work has taken place at Old Lodge Bottom, Ellisons Ponds, Fairwarp Church and major improvements to the ride below Nutley Windmill.

Chris Sutton, East Chase - My main task this term has been the training of Bobby obviously mixing in a bit of work on the Chase. He has helped me with boundary walking which as normal turns up more trouble with encroachments and byelaw breaches. Surprisingly, it was all done by the deadline. The last few weeks have been supervising the insulating and double glazing of the Education/meeting room. Hopefully there won't be too much obvious change except it might be warmer in the winter and cooler in the summer.

The long dry spell in the spring raised the fire risk to high; however we were fortunate that the 2 fires which did occur were started in a position which enabled them to be controlled quickly and without too much damage to the Forest. Earlier in the spring we were able to execute 2 good back burns, behind Blackhill and Kidds hill, which are now being grazed by our sheep. As usual the fine weather came to an end when we started ride repairs. Dodging the rain seemed to work quite well and areas around Crows Nest Clump and New road were treated to much needed repairs and drainage work.

The entrance to Box and Pines Car parks have been resurfaced and hopefully Box will get a nice tarmac entrance to prevent the work we did being eroded again.

That's all, back to dog training....



The Conservators of Ashdown Forest

The Ashdown Forest Centre
Wych Cross
Forest Row
RH18 5JP

PHONE:

01342 823583

01342 822846

FAX:

01342 824177

E-MAIL:

charlottebain@ashdownforest.org

ros@ashdownforest.org

conservators@ashdownforest.org

Website

www.ashdownforest.org

(46,993 hits Jan-May)

Ashdown Forest Blog

www.blog.ashdownforest.org

(11,466 hits Jan-May)



(2773 followers)



(1366 likes)



E-news (1041 subscribers)



(2,241 views)



Just a little request.....

Please can all Volunteers park in the main Visitor Centre car park rather than in the yard. The yard is getting rather busy and congested and the Rangers and Countryside Team need as much space as possible for the maneuvering of trucks and tractors. Thank you.



Information Barn Volunteers please remember.....

There is a new system for the sale of Juliet Murray's cards and prints. These will now be scanned and put through the till. There is a sheet with the relevant barcodes in the green folder. All cash and credit card slips need to be put in the main section of the till like regular shop sales and no longer put in a separate envelope. Please continue to mark off which of her prints have been sold on the sales sheet.

All exhibition sales, plus those for Dave Brooker and James Warwick will continue to be processed as before and there are corresponding envelopes in the till. There is a reminder of the process in the front of the green folder but if you have any questions please do ask. We will review the system over the summer to see if any improvements can be made.

Events on the Forest.....

Throughout the year there are number of events on the Forest that are not organised by the office. Here is a list of what is currently in the diary. Information is sent out via our E-News service on a Friday of upcoming events that weekend. If you haven't already done so do sign up to receive these alerts on our website – www.ashdownforest.org.

24 May -Weald Challenge Trail Race – Vanguard and Wealdway

31 May - Evans cycle event

31 May – Greater Haywards Heath bike ride

7 June - BMFA flying competition

28 June - BMFA flying competition

11 July - Fairwarp village fete

11 July – Sponsored horse ride

12 July - BMFA flying competition

13 July - Hever Castle Long Course Triathlon

25 July - Endurance bike event

11 September - ALSAR search dog training – Box or Twyford

13 September – Kit Wilson Trust sponsored dog walk – Pylons

20 September – AFRA Pleasure Ride – Blackhill

27 September – Weald Challenge running event

4 October - ALSAR search dog training – Box or Twyford

15 November - ALSAR search dog training – Box or Twyford

15 November – Orienteering event – Hindleap

6 December - ALSAR search dog training – Box or Twyford

Watch out.....livestock about!!



The livestock are now back out on the Forest. Updates on the location of the grazing enclosures and livestock movement are posted on the website and social media plus emailed out to those signed up to the E-News service. Laminated maps of the enclosures are also available for reference in the Information Barn.

