

The Volunteer



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The Newsletter for all Ashdown Forest Volunteers
Issue 15 – March/April/May

Christmas – how was it for you...?

Well, the much publicised snow for October failed to arrive and November 2011 was one of the warmest on record! The autumn was truly a 'season of mists and mellow fruitfulness' with bumper crops of fruit and fungi (but of course NOT on fungi day!) It was the end of December when we had our first really cold weather and snow fall – but that only lasted a couple of days. As I am typing this introduction the weather has been blowing an absolute gale for two days – and as you can imagine the team has been busy though not as busy as we feared – which shows that the hard work and attention the team have shown to roadside and potentially dangerous trees has really paid off.



Fallen tree across the A22 – Thursday 5th January

Before we knew it the Christmas Party was upon us – and our sincerest thanks go to Janet Wirdnam and Anne Smith for their fantastic help. Thanks also go to Mike Payne for helping with the decorations, Rich Allum for being the best barman and quiz master ever, Chris Sutton for keeping the mulled wine flowing and to the team from Crawley Probation Services who put out all the tables and chairs. A big thank you also goes to Caroline FitzGerald for organising and delivering the really delicious meat!

You may be wondering what is happening with the post of 'Director'. The advert, job description and person specification were posted on our website at the beginning of January with interviews planned for mid to late February. Hopefully a new person will be in post at some point in April. As soon as we are able we will let you know. Though knowing the 'jungle drums' around here you will be telling me!

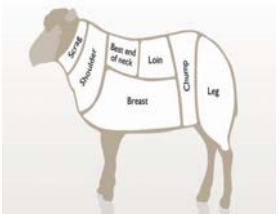
Chris Marrable has done a really wonderful job over the last few months and has been a fabulous leader but I am sure he will be delighted to get back to his conservation role full time – thank you Chris!

PS: I spoke too soon its snowing again now and is minus 4 !!

Update on Grazing...



The Hebridean sheep were grazing on the Forest within electric fences right up until the first frosts. Several areas were successfully grazed this summer such as Wrens Warren; Jumpers Town and near Cats Protection in Chelwood Gate. Although there were some incidents with dogs chasing the sheep there were no serious injuries other than the one well publicized incident. We received a great deal of public support regarding responsible dog ownership. The story was picked up by the media – with the issue being discussed during a ‘phone-in’ on Uckfield FM.



The wethers (castrated male sheep) went to slaughter in late autumn and the meat was given as a ‘thank you’ to people who had helped the grazing project. Hogget played a starring role in the Christmas Party this year. Ros created a wonderful rich and fruity Moroccan Lamb Tagine – recipe on application!

A simple method to get the best meaty flavour out of hogget...



Preheat the oven to 170C/gas 3.

Grate the onions (or if you can't cope with the tears, finely slice!) and place them in a tray or casserole dish large enough to hold the shoulder. Put the bay leaves and star anise on top of the onions and place the shoulder of hogget on top of them. Pour over the water.

Slow-braised hogget
2 kg shoulder of hogget
1.5 kg onions, grated
4 bay leaves
1 star anise
150 ml water

Cover with foil and put the meat into the oven and cook for about three hours or until the meat is beginning to fall from the bone. Uncover for the last hour just to brown and crisp up a little. Taste for seasoning and allow the meat to rest before carving.

Serve with sliced potatoes cooked in lamb stock and buttered baby kale. Yum!

Forthcoming Exhibitions...

We have a full and very varied programme of exhibitions over the next 12 months. Check the website for dates and titles. Below will give you an indication of what to expect:

John Lanteri-Laura – this will be a very different, challenging exhibition using large scale photographs and Victorian techniques.
www.photographicpractices.com



Julia Rowlands – Julia produces vibrant and colourful landscapes and townscapes and she will be exhibiting with us for the first time in June.
www.wix.com/juliadr3/juliarowlands

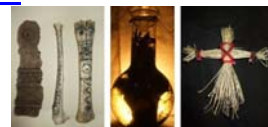


Mervyn Hathaway – Mervyn's beautiful dreamlike landscapes will contain some surprises!
www.mhathaway.co.uk

Oliver Pyle – an inspirational amateur painter and landscape photographer based in Sussex.
www.lightlandscape.blogspot.com/2011_09_01_archive.html

East Grinstead Camera Club – competition winners exhibition.
www.egcc.org.uk/club/Home.html

Helen Hockin – dark and mysterious artworks, light boxes and sculpture based on natural materials, pigments and forms.
<http://helenhockin.blogspot.com/p/sticks-stones-and-bones.html>



Hidden Talents – a return visit from Wealden Sheltered Housing art group.

Helen Bardsley and friends – an exhibition by local rider, mounted ranger and AFRA committee member.
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Forest History – Richard Jefferies, 6 Nov 1848 – 14 Aug 1887...

John Richard Jefferies (6 November 1848 – 14 August 1887) was an English nature writer, noted for his depiction of English rural life in essays, books of natural history, and novels. His childhood on a small farm near Swindon had a great influence and provides the background to all his major works of fiction.

He was born at Coate in Wiltshire, the son of a farmer. He spent many of his formative years with relatives in Sydenham with holidays at Coate where he learned to shoot and hunt. The gun he habitually carried as a young teenager drew the worst suspicions of local landowners.

In 1864, at the age of sixteen, he and a cousin ran off to France, intending to walk to Russia. After crossing the channel, they soon found that their schoolboy French was insufficient and returned to England. Before they reached Swindon, they noticed an advertisement for cheap crossings from Liverpool to America and set off in this new direction. The tickets however, did not include the cost of food; and the boys were forced to return to home after an attempt to pawn their watches had drawn the attention of the police.

In 1866 Jefferies began work as a jobbing journalist in Swindon, the editor of the paper; William Morris encouraged him to develop his writing. By 1867 the first signs of tuberculosis, the disease that would eventually kill him, were appearing.



In 1874, the year of his first published novel, *'The Scarlet Shawl'*, he married Jessie Baden the daughter of a Wiltshire farmer. After living for a few months at Coate

Farm, the couple moved to a house in Swindon and in 1875 and their first child, Richard Harold Jefferies, was born. The family moved to Surbiton, then at the limits of London's growth, and Jefferies spent much time wandering through the nearby countryside; these walks would later provide the material for his book *'Nature Near London'* (1883). The Surbiton years defined Jefferies as a country writer and his articles on country life found favour in urban publications such as the Pall Mall Gazette. There followed books such as *'The Game Keeper at Home'*, *'Life in the Southern Counties'*, the *'Amateur Poacher'* and *'Round About the Great Estate'* all written between 1879 and 1881.

By 1881 his health was failing but his imagination was as strong as ever and novels appeared such as *'After London'* (1885), an early example of "post-apocalyptic fiction": after some sudden and unspecified catastrophe has depopulated England, the countryside reverts to nature, and the few survivors to a quasi-medieval way of life. It is said that the book served as an inspiration for William Morris's utopian *'News from Nowhere'* (1890).

The family moved briefly to Eltham and then on to Rotherfield, eventually settling at a house on Crowborough Hill where he completed his most ambitious and unusual novel, *'Amaryllis at the Fair'* (1887). Closely based on his own family at Coate, it describes a farm and family imperceptibly approaching disaster. There is little narrative development; instead significant or typical moments are presented in short scenes and tableaux.

Illness and reduced productivity led to a loss of income and Jefferies was encouraged by his editor to apply to the Royal Literary Fund. He hated the idea of patronage and resisted.

Eventually he was persuaded - he was granted £100. The family used the funds to move to Goring-on-Sea but it was to no avail - on 14 August 1887, he died of tuberculosis and exhaustion. He is buried in Broadwater Cemetery in Worthing.

After his death, a number of posthumous collections were made of his writings previously published in newspapers and magazines, beginning with *'Field and Hedgerow'* (1889), edited by his widow. New collections have appeared over the century following his birth, but even now not all have been reprinted in book form.



"That is the saddest of thoughts — as we grow older the romance fades, and all things become commonplace. Half our lives are spent in wishing for to-morrow, the other half in wishing for yesterday. Wild-flowers alone never become commonplace. The white wood-sorrel at the foot of the oak, the violet in the hedge of the vale, the thyme on the wind-swept downs, they were as fresh this year as last, as dear to-day as twenty years since, even dearer, for they grow now, as it were, in the earth we have made for them of our hopes, our prayers, our emotions, our thoughts" from *'Amaryllis at the Fair'* written whilst at Crowborough in 1887.

Volunteer Recruitment...

Training has finished for our Mounted Volunteer Rangers; Claudia Christopher; Sue Wheeler; Sue Field; Sue Culling; Rebecca Johns; Amy Parcell; Sarah Grue; Lisa Gorrie; Rebecca Tapsell; Pauline Povey; Helen Bardsley and Jennifer Alford. All are out-and-about patrolling the Forest on an almost daily basis along with Deborah Waygood and Beth Beardshaw. They all wear yellow hi-vis jackets with their title emblazoned on the back, and the horses have yellow badges – so they are easily seen by other riders and staff. Please say hello if you meet them on the Forest.

Forest Centre Development...

No real news for you at the moment but a great deal is going on behind the scenes. The FC Development Working Party continues to meet to discuss the planning application, the fund raising strategy and the business plan. There are also ongoing discussions about improving and widening the scope of education at the Centre and how this could be implemented in the future. An independent ecologist was commissioned to perform an appropriate assessment (which looks at how the development will impact on the SSSI) and we, and the planners, await the results.

Proposed Forest Centre Events - 2012

This year we are hoping to hold a series of child and family friendly events at the Forest Centre. They will be as cost effective as possible (i.e. cheap to organize and run!) as we don't have a budget for this kind of thing and external funding is probably not an option. However, some events will be lead by our friends Lisa and Rachel (the Sussex Wildlife Teachers), Pamela Hurwitz (artist) and Lyn Merrick (Gatekeeper Guides) for a nominal charge. So far we have come up with:

A children's natural art day (led by Pamela); a child focused bush craft event (possibly an adult one if we can find a leader); a family / adult 'dawn chorus' walk (possibly with tea and a bacon butty afterwards; a family / adult focused 'twilight chorus' walk; a family focused nightjar walk (the Friends have adult walks); a series of family focused nature / bird walks (perhaps with some activities at the Centre); a late spring sheep event (with lambs on site) and a camp building day. We also thought that the creation of a bracken maze would be fun along with a simple treasure hunt or nature trail. We hope that many of you will help me in organizing, arranging or leading an event (the more the merrier) – **please** say yes as I can't do it alone!

We also hope that our friends at ESAMP will want to hold their history/Mesolithic day with us again and that East Sussex Libraries will help us out with some story telling sessions. SWT will be holding a mini-beast

Information Barn...

The AV unit is back but in a new location! 'Tit-Cam' will be linked to, and run via the AV unit, giving clearer pictures of the nest box.

Excitingly there will be a new film added to the AV featuring 'The Archaeology of Ashdown Forest'. (Ashdown Forest Life will have a two page 'making of' feature in the spring). A new set of operating instructions will be posted in the barn as there will be a couple of small differences. The new film will be accompanied by four new walks leaflets guiding visitors to and around some sites of archaeological interest – these are being devised by archaeologists Dr Chris Butler and Viv Sandford (a set is enclosed!)

You may recall that three leaflets were not re-designed and printed at the last tranche. I am pleased to say that Hindleap, A Walk Amongst Friends and Beyond the Pale are all having a 'make-over' and will be re-published very soon.

Newly designed information panels are now going out on the Forest. The first was at Gills Lap and is a memorial panel (with the dedication being quite discretely placed) and was followed by Broadstone, Millbrook and Kings Standing. More will follow if funding is available. The new design is very different from previous panels and is (in our opinion) light, fresh, easy to read and very attractive. Leaflets, panels, Ashdown Forest Life and the website are all being pulled into the same clean, fresh 'house style' – we hope you like it and feedback would be welcome.

The Wag Log – I’m your man!...



Dear Sir / Madam,

I have learned that you are currently recruiting for the position of Top Dog (a.k.a. Forest Director). Please will you consider my application?

Name: Scallywag Allum

Age: 40 (estimated)

Current Position: Forest Ranger

Present Salary: House with comfy bed by radiator, truck, ample ‘Naturediet’ & limitless treats

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



I am a bit of a rags to Rich’s story(!). Sadly I was orphaned as a pup and became an urchin in Rochdale. I was picked up off the streets but managed to find a human to rescue at Raystede Animal Welfare Centre. I became a Forest Ranger in 2005 (aged about 6). I have over 30 (dog) years’ experience on Ashdown Forest, having been West Chase Ranger and now South Chase Ranger, so I know my way around the Forest!

I have a proven track record at managing humans (if I can manage him, I can manage anyone!). Currently I manage all the Forest dogs, their staff and volunteers. I am expert in both human and canine behaviour. I also have experience at managing livestock (especially Hebridean sheep); I am good with cows and horses too. I am also very familiar with the Forest’s Fallow deer population! I am intimately acquainted with most of the Forest’s pond life (literally and metaphorically)! Last year I attended a University of Sussex course on the history of Ashdown Forest so my knowledge of Forest past and present is excellent.

As you may know, I have done quite a bit of media work (including countless TV appearances) and I am currently featured in Sussex Living magazine (February edition). In my spare time I enjoy walking, playing, eating, sleeping and watching wildlife documentaries.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Grazing apprenticeship ...

The Heritage Lottery Fund has awarded a grant under its *Skills for the Future Programme* to the Grazing Advice Partnership to set up and run a nationwide programme of traineeships. The aim is to offer trainees a mix of ‘on-the-job’ work experience and instruction in the practical skills associated with livestock handling and conservation training. Trainees will receive a bursary, mentoring support and access to GAP training courses. Ten locations were identified across the UK and Ashdown Forest has been selected as a suitable host for the scheme! Caroline will be sharing the apprentice with Townings Farm (a rare breeds farm with cattle, pigs and Hebridean sheep) and the Sussex Pony Grazing and Conservation Trust (semi-feral Exmoor ponies). There was a great deal of interest in the apprenticeship and interviews are taking place in early February with a view to the apprentice taking up their role in April. To find out more about the scheme visit http://www.grazingadvicepartnership.org.uk/gap_traineeships.html



Conservation Group ...



American Cherry
The new enemy

We have met just three times under the new regime. On the first task, we had a go at the invasive cherry scrub growing in Chelwood Gate. It was a warm day with a big hot fire which made it a bit uncomfortable but we certainly made a big impression on this problem weed. On the second event, we cleared birch scrub from a small area of heathland behind Warren car park – a miserable, drizzly day but a sensible sized project of which we completed about 80%. We will go back and finish it off one day soon. At the end of November, we collected Christmas trees from near Churlwood car park. The total sales of trees over the following three weeks raised not far off £2000, so it was a well worthwhile job.

Over the next few months it would be nice to finish off the Warren site, do a bit of hazel coppicing in Cackle Street, perhaps clear some of the Forest centre pond and coppice some of the specimen trees there and attack some scrub around the Broadstone quarry. Or any other exciting job that might come to mind.....

Chris Marrable

Conservation and Management News...

The team has spent a few weeks out behind Churlwood car park doing scrub clearance. There will also be scrub clearance alongside the Airstrip, one of the Vachery drives, behind Hindleap car park and the Isle of Thorns boundary. There was a small fire near the Isle of Thorns caused by a contractor's bonfire – it was quickly extinguished with the help of Fire & Rescue and no serious damage was done.

Mike P has had small volunteer groups from Sackville school, HSBC and now Young People with Epilepsy dealing with the growing problem of American Black Cherry. Probationers on 'Community Payback' have worked all through the winter and have done a multitude of jobs on the Forest. The team will be hosting a restorative justice session with a young male from Crowborough who after doing several damaging 'doughnuts' in one of the car-parks was tracked down by the Police. He will be doing some heavy hands on labour with the team.

There have been continued problems with dog control and there were three incidents in two weeks. One of these, very sadly, ended up with a dog being killed on the A22.

Mike P and Chris M are looking at continuing the programme of maintenance at the Vachery (with the unconfirmed possibility of pond dredging on the smaller cascade ponds). We will keep you posted on developments.

Winter was 'estover' time and it proved to be a very busy one. There were 147 applications (up on last year), several were not granted and some new applicants were turned away (as they were non-commoners and not at all local to the Forest). Many more called up who were keen to get on the list for next year! Boundary walking by the Rangers has been on-going through the winter as and when time has allowed. This will be

Bird Feeder...

You will notice a bird feeding station has appeared at the back of the Forest Centre visible from the down stairs exhibition space. The pole was created on a wet afternoon by Chris M and the feeders are all bargains from a well known on-line source! Bulk supplies of feed will be stored in the boiler room in rat proof bins. Once the station is established Tracy will all be taking responsibility for keeping the feeders filled up. It would also be helpful to keep the bird bath filled with clean water. We would like to increase the bird feeding station and any clean nut and seed feeders or feeding stations poles / hangers would be much appreciated. In due course we hope to get a web cam so we can show the action on our website!



EXHIBITION REVIEWS

Nature Stripped Bare...

This interesting exhibition of natural artworks finally closed to the public on 31 December 2011 after a successful run. Visitors, particularly children, were inspired to go out, hunt for natural objects and have a go themselves. A big thank you to all three artists for exhibiting with us and for sharing their space with the woodturners! Also thank you to Pamela for agreeing to hold a couple of children's art sessions.

Ashdown Forest Woodturners...

The Ashdown Forest Woodturners made, yet another, very welcome visit to the Centre. Their range of hand made wooden gifts always proves popular with visitors – and this year was no exception. Many visitors specifically ask if the woodturners are exhibiting so they can make a special trip and I am happy to say they will be back again at the end of 2012.

James Barrett...

The exhibition has been very well received by the public and there have been many really positive and complimentary comments. We hope James will exhibit with us again in the future!
www.jamesbarrettphotography.co.uk



Fungi Day

The dry weather almost proved the undoing of Fungi Day this year! There was so little about even seasoned fungi hunters had nothing to show for hours of poking around in the woods. Thankfully our visitors were a little more successful – but there was very little on the table compared to previous years. Thankfully artist, Lynn Merrick (of Gatekeeper Guide fame), was on hand to help our younger visitors make and paint clay sculptures and several were proudly carried home by their creators!



Hopefully Lynn will come back on fungi day next year as well as doing some days for us in the school summer holidays.

ESAMP Family Day

We have had a couple of visits now from our friends at East Sussex Archaeology and Museums Partnership. The Family Day took place on 27th October at the Forest Centre and was well attended by the public. ESAMP were demonstrating aspects of everyday life in the Mesolithic period (8,000 years ago) through hands-on activities such as flint-knapping, archery, making string from nearby plants and learning about wild plant foods.



ESAMP also regularly use our site as a base for their training sessions with young people. They teach a variety of skills – flint-knapping, fire making, string making, coppicing, hurdle making and, of course, hut making.



The Conservators of Ashdown Forest

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We're on the Web!

See us at:

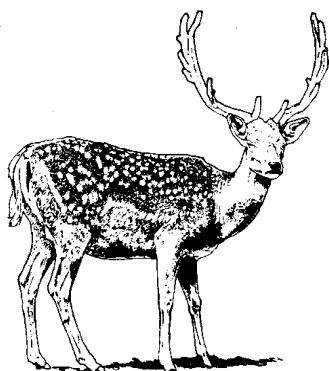
www.ashdownforest.org

and on social networking at

Twitter (894 followers)

Facebook (131)

LinkedIn



Volunteer Litter Picking...

The team very urgently need extra hands to assist with road-side litter picking. We are looking for ½ or full days and will be targeting specific 'black-spots' – a Forest vehicle, litter pickers, hi-vis will be supplied. For safety reasons you would need to pick in pairs – if you are able to help out please contact Rich or Chris Sutton directly on rich@ashdownforest.org and/or chriss@ashdownforest.org – thank you in anticipation.

Big fat zero...

Exactly the number of visitors welcomed to the Centre on 6th September. However we did have torrential sideways rain, storm force winds and ESCC highways digging up the road! A big thank you to Andy for sticking with it and spending time sorting out the stockroom!

New courses with Sussex University ...

There are two new courses taking place at the Forest Centre. 'Pre-History of Ashdown Forest and High Weald' with Dr R Canter and 'Researching the History of Ashdown Forest' with Prof. Brian Short.

Missing Post...

Apologies to anyone who didn't get the last newsletter – it seems that a batch of mail went missing in the post. Board papers have also gone astray and we can only assume our post box isn't being emptied as regularly as it should be.

Information Volunteers...

We are still having trouble filling slots on the board please pop in and put your name down in a gap – it was great to be able to keep the Centre open for visitors right through to the end of October. If anyone is free and available to help with recruitment or suggest how we can best go about it do let me know.

Ashdown Forest App...

An app is a mini-website created for users of 'smart' phones. We now have an app that can be downloaded free from the I-tunes store which has ten of our walks enabled. Thanks to our partners, listed below, for their support with this project.



And finally...

Snowmen have appeared across the Forest recently. It makes a change to see a snow bunny (or is it a hare). The snap was posted by a Facebook friend but they didn't say if it was on the Forest. On a more traditional note, a classic snowman from our friends at Ashdown Park Hotel – it's apparently been named Gavin!

