

The Volunteer



IN THIS ISSUE:

- From the Director's Chair...
- Date for the diary
- Message from the Chairman...
- Recipe of the Season...
- What's in a name...
- Grazing update..
- WagLog
- Fungi Day...
- Clerk's News...
- Upcoming exhibitions...
- Conservation and Management news...
- Finally...

The Newsletter for all Ashdown Forest Volunteers

From the Director's Chair...

Another very busy few months!

As you know we have been nominated for the 'Queens Award for Volunteering' by the Chair of Wealden District Council (Barby Dashwood-Morris). Following numerous forms to fill in and a grilling by two Deputy Lord Lieutenants I was able to introduce them to the 12 or so of you who had agreed to be at the assessment visit. It goes without saying that they were hugely impressed by the scale and variety of the support you give us – Thank You! We now have to wait some time until we hear if we are successful (it could be up to three years) but I have no doubt that they went away with a very positive view of our volunteer programme.

We have an interesting and exciting year coming up with the review of governance arrangements (see the 'Message from the Chairman' overleaf) and the start of the 'new' Countryside Stewardship scheme – as ever, your views and thoughts are very welcome so do come along to hear more at one of the additional meetings we are arranging over the coming weeks plus the next Coffee Morning in April.

The Christmas party was lovely – thank you to the cooks amongst you, everyone who helped in so many ways to make it such an enjoyable occasion – no doubt Rich will be testing you on your newly gained knowledge of Forest 'hatches and gates'!

A very Happy New Year to you and your families – may it be a peaceful and healthy one for us all!

Pat

DATE FOR THE DIARY!!

VOLUNTEER COFFEE
MORNING

THURSDAY 14TH APRIL





A message from the Chair of the Board of Conservators – December 2015

Ashdown Forest is an extraordinary place: a natural environment of considerable significance.

The current governance arrangements were established over 40 years ago, and whilst they have served the Forest well, work is now beginning to ensure these arrangements are brought up to date and are fit for the future management of the Forest. The aim is to create 'best in class' governance.

Through the centuries the Forest has changed hands several times and today is owned by the Ashdown Forest Trust (a Charity), with elected members of East Sussex County Council as Trustees. The Trust and Conservators will be working together to ensure that arrangements are put in place to guarantee the conservation and management of the Forest will continue, as enshrined in the Ashdown Forest Act 1974:

'It shall be the duty of the Conservators at all times as far as possible to regulate and manage the forest as an amenity and place of resort subject to the existing rights of common upon the forest and to protect such rights of common, to protect the forest from encroachments, and to conserve it as a quiet and natural area of outstanding beauty.'

What are we trying to achieve?

A new charitable organisation to own, run and manage the Ashdown Forest independent of East Sussex County Council and Wealden District Council.

Why do we need to do this?

- Because we must rationalise the current arrangements as there appears to be confusion and duplication between the Ashdown Forest Trust, the Ashdown Forest Conservation Trust and the Conservators.
- Concern on this was expressed by the Charity Commission and a Review agreed.
- Because there is a requirement to raise additional funds for which there is not currently a suitable vehicle.

Over the coming weeks we will be keeping everyone informed of progress.

Lamb or hogget stew with capers and olives

Serves 6-8

Takes 2.5 hours

Ingredients

1 tbsp olive oil

1.5kg (3lb 5oz) boned and rolled shoulder of lamb or hogget, sliced in 6 or 8 rounds, or cut into 3cm (1in) cubes

4 onions, peeled and quartered

4 garlic cloves, peeled and sliced

25g (1oz) plain flour

2 cans chopped tomatoes, each 400g (14oz)

Leaves from 1 bunch of oregano, chopped

2 sprigs of rosemary

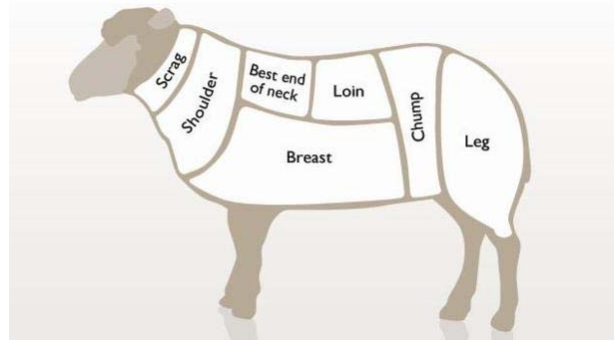
350g (12oz) black olives, stoned

25g (1oz) small capers, rinsed

600ml (1 pint) white wine

Leaves from 1 bunch of coriander, chopped

Taken from 'The Ginger Pig Meat Book' by Fran Warde & Tim Wilson



1. Preheat the oven to 190 °C/gas mark 5.
2. Heat the olive oil in a large roasting tin in the oven, then add the lamb/hogget and turn to coat in the hot oil. Return to the oven and cook for 10mins, then add the onions and garlic and return to the oven for a further 10 minutes.
3. Reduce the oven temperature to 170 °C/ gas mark 3. Sprinkle in the flour and mix with all the cooking juices, then stir in the tomatoes, oregano, rosemary, olives, capers and wine. Cover with a sheet of baking parchment, pressed down on the mix, then seal with a sheet of kitchen foil all the way around.
4. Place in the oven and cook for 1 hour. Uncover and turn the meat, then reseal the foil and cook for a further hour. Finally, add the chopped coriander and serve.

Clerk's News...

Having been in the role for over six months, I am now more accustomed to the ever changing and extremely diverse nature of the Forest. From missing parrots to straying cattle, the calls provide an interesting distraction from the licences and spreadsheets.

Delighted to confirm DEFRA have now signed, on behalf of the Secretary of State, the Bye-law fine increase to Standard Scale 2 – a fine not exceeding £500. Signage across the Forest and on various media channels has and will be updated accordingly. Drones however, continue to be a controversial topic particularly as they are now more affordable and more widely available. The use of them on the Forest is strictly prohibited and against the Bye-laws; commercial use is only permitted through a chargeable filming licence for which the pilot in command of the drone must comply with strict CAA guidelines.

Sad to report sheep attacks have increased in the last few months with several nasty incidents involving the police. As the attacks have taken place on private land on the Forest, the Conservators are powerless to take legal action.

For those of you who haven't paid a visit to the Forest Centre recently, we have undertaken an office redesign to allow Charlie, Louise and myself space to share the same office. This has worked well and maximised room although the dogs now find it more challenging to access my middle drawer.

Kirsty

WHAT'S IN A NAME

The origin of many Forest names is by no means certain. Often local tradition gives one explanation, whilst historical and linguistics experts suggest something quite different. Some are derived from the personal name of the landowner – Kidds Hill, for example.

Here are the possible origins of some names most frequently queried.

NAME	POSSIBLE ORIGIN
Beggars Bush	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Begar' is an old word meaning berry, referring to the holly clump
Cackle Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Cockle' is a 17th century term for a hop drying kiln and one may have existed in this area • Geese may have regularly been driven down this road
Camp Hill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 1973 there was a temporary army camp here during the Napoleonic wars but the name pre-dates this, being mentioned in 16th century documents. • 'Camp' or 'comp' means an enclosed area and could be related to an ancient bank nearby • Nearby are three yew trees which stand for hospitality; this would include a pound for drover's stock (a 'comp').
Chelwood Vachery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was a farm belonging to Michelham Priory (13th Century); the French is used due to its Norman origin.
Garden of Eden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name given to an idyllic play-place by a local family
Gills Lap	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the Parliamentary Survey of 1685 it is spelled 'Jill's Lap'. This suggests that a soft 'G' was in local use at the time.
Goat Cross Roads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From an old ale-house known as the 'God Be Thanked' • Old word 'gote', a water course
Isle of Thorns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16th century origin – an enclosure made of thorns. • The 'butcher bird' or red-backed shrike impales food items on thorns. It may have occurred in the area
Kings Standing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covered structure or 'standing' allowed nobles to shoot deer with crossbows as they were driven before them. Brick, tile and pottery found in the area show that there was a building there.
Old Airstrip	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was constructed during WW2 as a training exercise for Canadian troops. One B17 Flying Fortress made a safe landing.
Warren	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Much of the Forest was sold during the 17th century to be used for rabbit farming

Update on Grazing.....from Caroline FitzGerald



Ashdown Aspidistra - Born Feb 2015.

Our first Riggitt heifer calf was always going to be Aspidistra. She's named after the 2nd World War radio station on the top of the Forest. Built to provide disinformation and confusion to the enemy, it was the biggest in the world. Thus radio Aspidistra. Today it's the police training area.



Ashdown Asphodel - Born Feb 2015

Named for the bog asphodel that grows on the bog pools of the Forest.



Ashdown Angelica - Born Nov 2015

Well just a nice traditional flower name really



Delta - Born Nov 2015

Not forgetting the bull calf, Delta. We use the phonetic

The WagLog #24 – “Beyond the Pale!”

Happy New Year! My “old man” celebrated his 10-year anniversary on the Forest in November which coincided with my 70th birthday. I have been a Forest Ranger since I was 10 human months old – well over 9 of your years.

What a shame I was “canina non grata” at the Christmas party (something about getting under everyone’s feet – as if?!). I heard I missed out on some delicious lamb (gutted!). He’s feeling a bit guilty about his Forest Pale Christmas quiz, which he says was a bit too tricky this year (although I thought it was a bit much that one team set fire to it!). He’s already trying to think of something equally novel (but not quite so difficult) for next Christmas. Incidentally, the term “beyond the Pale” actually originates from the ancient history of Forests. Forests were tracts of land set aside by the nobility for hunting deer, wild boar etc. Ashdown Forest was once the King’s hunting ground. These Forests were encircled by a Pale to prevent the animals disappearing into the wider countryside and to control the movement of people and their livestock. “Forest Law” applied within the pale; this protected the King’s interests and controlled the commoners’ behaviour. But “beyond the Pale”, Forest law did not apply so society was significantly less refined!

As I was telling you, the last Waglog was written on the eve of our Dorset trip, and I promised you a report... Well, we had a great time staying in Wool near Wareham (appropriately enough, our cottage was surrounded by fields full of handsome Dorset Down sheep!). I ate banana & honey ice cream (specially formulated for canines), frequented country pubs, took a steam train, visited Corfe Castle, the Blue Pool, Arne Nature Reserve, Lulworth Cove and Old Harry Rocks. Typically, he managed to get us lost on Holton Heath and Morden Bog. We covered miles of the South West coastal path around Worth Matravers with spectacular views across to the Jurassic Coast. I enjoyed delicious fish & chips on the seafront in Swanage. But my favourite place of all was Studland Bay – swimming in the sea, racing across miles of sandy beaches, dunes and lovely heathy tracks. Thankfully it was too chilly for him to get his kit off (I’d have been so embarrassed). He was so appalled by the grammar on the sign photographed below that he threatened to cancel his National Trust membership (but can you see why?)!



Lots of love & kisses, Scallywag X

Report on (almost no) Fungi Day Thursday, October 29th 2015

Identification by Ted Tudenham, assisted by Anne Smith.

The information desk was manned by Janet Wirdnam and Anne King

Just as last year, it was atrocious weather with heavy rain over several days and on the day itself it was raining hard early, becoming lighter as the day progressed. However the ground was virtually waterlogged which did not entice people to go foraging. In fact not one of us was able to persuade any of the visitors to venture forth clutching a paper bag in which to carry specimens back for identification.



I do know that there was very little out there to be collected having walked the previous day for four hours and finding so few. It is thanks to several members of staff who brought in a few more specimens to bulk up the display tables.

One or two specimens were of real interest to Ted but it was disappointing for us to have so few edibles as the majority of interested visitors are normally keen to forage for something which may possibly become breakfast! In fact I certainly felt a bit deprived not to be able to pass on some of the useful information that I have gleaned over my 20 years of learning

and foraging ... Also not to be able to enjoy the identification process especially with children, who are so keen to learn and show what finds they have. Ted very kindly set up a microscope to help with the identification process but again this was not put to good use because of the lack of people/interest.

The number of visitors on Fungi Day.....59 adults and 23 children. Disappointingly low but understandable.

As the weather has been almost identical for two years running I wonder if it would be a good idea to hold a Fungi Day in late August/early September.... when there has been an abundance of fungi, so much so that one was almost tripping over them. This suggested time would still be within the school holiday period.

Anne

Conservation and Management News.....

Mike Yates, North Chase –

I spent most of September spraying Rhododendron which had previously been cut by volunteers and the Community Payback Teams from Crawley. A priority job, as Rhododendron Ponticum is highly invasive and expensive to eradicate. Much of this work was carried out on the South Chase as well as in the Golf Course woodland. We then spent over £1000 hiring a 40 yard skip so that we could clear the dump of flytipping and at the same time had the delightful job of clearing up the toxic remains of the caravan which was torched in Goat Car Park. Then again with the help of Community Payback we had to clear an illegal obstruction placed on Tomsets Bank by a resident who was trying prevent flooding in Highgate Road. Now we have just issued a £2000 deposit license to a public utility contractor in Forest Row after complaints from local residents and after a woman fell into one of their trenches and broke her ankle. The list goes on! The good news is that the little grey traffic monitor at Lintons is going to be moved as Wealden did not get consent from Natural England to put it there. Victory!

Mike Payne, West Chase –

Since September Volunteers have been very busy on the West chase.

There have been groups from Santander, Amey and Young People with Epilepsy working in Charlesmith Wood clearing Rhododendron ponticum.

The Conservation Volunteers have been doing an excellent job thinning woodland in the Vachery alongside the Gorge. The work here has made a substantial change to the walk down alongside the gorge, letting in lots of light, opening up the views and drying the paths.

Contractors have worked across multiple sites completing general scrub removal to improve the quality of heath.

Conservation and Management News continued.....

Rich Allum, South Chase –

This winter has seen the arrival of five Exmoor ponies supplied by the Sussex Pony Grazing & Conservation Trust. They are grazing within a fenced enclosure near Misbourne Farms. Exmoor ponies are just about the only livestock that can survive out on the Forest during the winter without supplementary feeding. This is partly because they're as tough as old boots (they survive out on Exmoor year-round), and because they can nibble the gorse which keeps them nourished when there's little else to eat.

Contractors are working in the Old Lodge Valley between Old Lodge Bottom, Ellisons Pond and Camp Hill Clump. They are clearing scrub & Rhododendron and thinning out the Scot's pine trees (most noticeably around Camp Hill Clump). Sometime in the New Year contractors will be tackling Rhododendron in the Clock House Lane area of Nutley.

Forest staff have restored heathland areas around Duddleswell and Fairwarp – cutting & treating scrub & Rhododendron and pushing back the woodland edge where it has encroached onto the open heath. We are hoping to get the right conditions between now and the beginning of March to begin an extended programme of controlled burns, in particular in the grazing area, to tackle the European gorse invasion.

Chris Sutton, East Chase -

As reported in the last but one newsletter, I signed off saying I had to get back to Bobby training. Well it's coming on fine (in my opinion). There has been some work done on the East Chase and when the weather is fine a lot of patrolling, looking at, which has been good but showed work which needed to be done in the future. A long awaited replacement to the disintegrating post and rail around Enchanted Memorial was carried out by the team along with ongoing barrier repairs. Take a look sometime and hopefully you'll see the result of their hard work.

Unfortunately another fire occurred at the beginning of June down at New Pond Cottages. Once again we were lucky with the ignition site and the wind direction taking it to woodland and fields. The residents of New Pond Cottage had the luxury of 2 fire Engines outside their house to protect them but they were never in trouble. Just had a lot of tea to make for thirsty fire personnel! The fire was just under 20 acres from memory and started by a walker who wanted a hot drink so used a camping stove to boil the water. We found the remains the following day with his unopened baked beans and sausages, so not just a hot drink which he told us.

My work has been Centre based more this year with ongoing Forest Centre Development and Health and Safety. This a slow process, not helped by the Boiler breaking down then being viewed as unsafe to use. It's not easy getting quotes together quickly especially over the Christmas period. This is a major project which, due to the age of the present central heating system, will require not just the boiler replaced but all the pipework around the buildings with their associated radiators. We had hoped to do it all with the centre refurbishment but the Ladies in the office can't wait that long! Presently 13 degrees in the admin office.

We are continuing the deer culling programme this autumn. We succeeded with the trial of 20 does last spring and the stalkers feel they can achieve more as they will have a longer period to work. Still doing small numbers but every little helps with the reduction of the overpopulation of the area and the high deer casualties on the road. Please remember why we are doing the cull on the Forest, for the overall health of the herd, try and prevent disease and starvation and to lighten the grazing in the woodland and heathland areas which will promote the declining ground flora. We are not using it to generate an income.

Post-Christmas there will be heathland clearance opposite Gills Lap Car Park and behind the Crow and Gate Pub.

Thanks for all you help and I will try to get out more before the next newsletter!



The Conservators of Ashdown Forest

The Ashdown Forest Centre
Wych Cross
Forest Row
RH18 5JP

PHONE:

01342 823583
01342 822846

E-MAIL:

charlottebain@ashdownforest.org
kirstydirs@ashdownforest.org
conservators@ashdownforest.org

Website

www.ashdownforest.org
(168,688 hits Aug-Dec)

Ashdown Forest Blog

www.blog.ashdownforest.org
(10,689 hits Aug-Dec)



(3,040 followers)



(1,722 likes)



E-news (1,083 subscribers)



Current and Upcoming Exhibitions.....



9th January – 30th April 2016

An unusual exhibition of Forest paintings by Ros Faram. Ros is a contemporary British painter who studied at Turps Art School and Chelsea School of Art. She is a daily visitor to the Ashdown Forest, living and working in its vicinity.

Please visit the Ros' website (www.rosfaram.com) for more information.

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.

17th January – Crowborough Runners, Kingstanding area

22nd January – ALSAR search dog training, Box/Twyford

7th February – ALSAR search dog training, Box/Twyford

7th February – Old Portlians Reliability Trail – Forest wide

21st February – Catford Cycling Club – Forest wide, using the Education Barn as refreshment stop

28th February – Kentish Killer cycling event, Forest wide

6th March – Darford Orienteering Club, Chelwood Vachery

6th March – ALSAR search dog training, Box/Twyford

13th March – Burgess Hill Cyclosporitive, Forest wide

And Finally....



A rainbow brightening up the gloom of a December morning, taken from the Forest Centre yard.

Photo: Tom Simon