



Friends of the Hurtwood

Administrators to the public rights of access to some 3000 acres of land in the parishes of Albury, Cranleigh, Ewhurst and Shere.

Registered Charity 200053

Spring
2017
No. 45

Friends Newsletter



Chairman's Letter

LAND SALES

I am pleased to confirm that following extensive discussions with the new landowners during last year, Friends of the Hurtwood now have Management Agreements that enable us to continue to manage public access on Pitch Hill and Winterfold Heath.

However at the time of writing we do not have Management Agreements to enable us to operate on the following areas of the Hurtwood:

- The portion of land amounting to about 40 acres on Holmbury Hill between Radnor Road and Ewhurst Rd extending from the edge of Peaslake Village to the entrance of the Coverwood Estate and including the car park (Number 11) on Radnor Road
- One small plot of about 15 acres on Shere Heath known as Parklands

So for the Hurtwood visitor, aside from subtle changes in some signage, little will change. Some boundary markers have appeared but these are only for reasons of title – no barriers will be erected to delineate ownership! For the Friends of the Hurtwood, or more specifically our Ranger, the key change is that we now have eight landowners to liaise with instead of just three!

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The trustees have reviewed the governance of your charity and are recommending a change to create a corporate trustee company. This change will be put to members for their agreement in a special proposal at the Annual Meeting in April. There is really nothing unusual in this proposal - we will be following in the footsteps of many other charities which have adopted this approach which provides an extra layer of protection to the individuals involved in the management of a charity. In simple terms, if agreed at the Annual Meeting, the change will mean that the individual trustees will be replaced by a corporate trustee company, to be called FOTH Trustee Company Ltd. Full details of the proposal will be contained in the papers for the Annual Meeting.

It has been five years since we last took a look at the longer term future for Friends of the Hurtwood. With the changes in land ownership and with the knowledge that we had the benefit of a large legacy, the trustees felt it appropriate to undertake a strategy review during 2016. Richard Green led this project and a summary of the actions from his review appear in a later section of this newsletter.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

At this time of significant change, there are opportunities for many more people to become involved with our charity. If any readers are able to give up some of their spare time to contribute, either as a volunteer or by becoming a trustee, please do make contact when more details will be provided about specific opportunities. As always there will be an opportunity for members to propose new trustees at the Annual Meeting.

A FOND FAREWELL TO DR JIM HEYES

After many decades as a trustee, Dr Jim Heyes will be retiring at the Annual Meeting. I would like to extend my personal thanks to Jim for his unstinting support to our charity over many decades and wish him well for the future.

Peter Copping, Foth Chairman

Friends of the Hurtwood

Contact details:

Friends of the Hurtwood
St Mark's Church Yard
Peaslake GU5 9RR
Office: 01306 730100 (Answer phone)
Ranger Mobile: 07920 705070
www.friendsofthehurtwood.co.uk

As already mentioned, the Hurtwood has seen some landowner changes over the last 18 months, however with the exception of a few smaller lots, all remains the same with business as usual. Everyone is keen for the Hurtwood to remain as open access to all, and my job is to make sure that everyone can enjoy equally, as much as is feasibly possible.

FLY TIPPING

Working with nature I have little choice about the work that she creates for me, and that's all part of the constant changing landscape that ensures I don't ever get bored! However one of the less pleasant aspects is the continual problem of fly tipping, which is still on the increase, with no sign of it reducing.

Over the last year I've had to remove beds, sofas, TVs, countless amounts of green waste and of course the seemingly obligatory black sack of foul smelling goodness knows what!

STORM DAMAGE

In April 2016 we had our first big storm with high winds bringing down a number of trees across the Hurtwood, but mostly the northern part of Holmbury Hill took the brunt of the winds. We had several large beech trees and a number of oaks as well as a few limbs across paths as well.



Messy Fly Tip...



...or bizarrely neat Fly Tip



It all has to be cleared up and taken away at huge expense in time and money



Clearing these is now so much easier with the tractor and its large front grab, but still takes a while to get round them all, and I really do appreciate you letting me know if you come across a blocked path, there's no way I'd have time to check them all, so any help is much appreciated.

PARKING

It may not have escaped your attention, that there is a general increase in visitor numbers all across the Surrey Hills, and for us this makes the Walking Bottom car park especially busy at the weekends. In the search for parking spaces some visitors had started to use the grass areas at the front of the car park, but as the weather turned wet, it was soon starting to turn into a muddy mess.

As a result we've had to take control, and put in a series of sweet chestnut stumps to keep cars off the grass. In the summer when the ground is hopefully hard and dry, we may well open up the area to help with parking issues.



ACCESS MANAGEMENT

We've also done some major work on repairing and cutting back the undergrowth on the bridleway that runs from the top pond near No.1 carpark, down to Radnor Road. The path had become very overgrown through lack of use, which was mostly due to the deep gully which had formed in the track. Unfortunately the path runs directly downhill, and forms a natural drain which will always create the gully, but we can do what we can to help it remain intact for as long as possible. I know many horse riders were finding it increasingly difficult to get up there safely, with only the most sure footed horse coping. It is an important path as it means riders can get off the road sooner and especially as the road it shortcuts, has some nasty bends on it too.

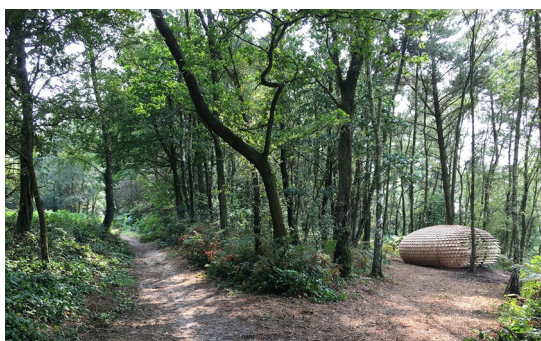


INSPIRING VIEWS ARTWORKS

With the aid of funding from The Mittal Foundation, the Surrey Hills AONB Board was able to fund a total of five new seats on the Surrey Hills, three of which are on the Hurtwood: One on Holmbury Hill, one on Reynards Hill and the third on Winterfold. A new large base was created for Matthew Burt's seats on Holmbury Hill, on part of the Disabled Access track. They are specifically designed to allow a wheelchair user to sit at the same height as people using the wooden benches.



As part of the project, the path to the top of Reynards Hill was resurfaced in a natural Green sandstone. This track was always muddy even in the summer months, as under the dense Beech trees, sunlight couldn't get through to keep the track dry. Now it has been built up, hopefully water should shed more easily. This path was paid for in a joint funding exercise between Surrey Hills Arts and landowner Jim McAllister.



On Winterfold sits the third seat, a pod covered in sweet chestnut shingles. We decided to site this one looking out more towards the west, to capture the beautiful views towards Blackdown.

Although we did have to cut a path that leads to the seat and remove a few trees to enhance the view, the pod sits very naturally into the landscape, and is definitely worth a visit.

Normally car park No.5 is the nearest to it, but due to forestry work, that car park (at the time of writing) is closed to the public, so I suggest parking at car park 4 or 6 and taking a short walk along the Greensand Way.



FOREST MANAGEMENT

Whilst on Winterfold, you may have seen the extensive felling work, this is all part of a long term forest plan to bring the woods into good rotational management. This also is a great opportunity to take a look at the newly formed views that most of us will not have seen before, enjoy them while you can.

THE PITCH HILL TRIANGLE

If you've walked up on to Pitch Hill heading south from Peaslake, you'll come across the triangle of Heather that over the years had become a bit overgrown with young birch and scots pine saplings. Thanks to a grant from FotH trustee, Cllr Keith Taylor's Member Allowance we were able to get the area cleared of all the re-growth. We will need to follow up later in the summer this year, with an application of herbicide to try and stop as much of the new growth as we can. I know a lot of local walkers appreciate having this little triangle of open heath on the hill.

Hopefully very soon now, we'll be getting a new grass mower that fits on the back of the tractor. It's very different to our existing one as it allows me to cut grass that's not directly behind the tractor, and also to cut grass at an angle, so banks can be cut by the tractor rather than strimming by hand. On the one hand I think it's always nice to see people working by hand out in the countryside, but this sort of mechanisation is, in the long run, a much cheaper and quicker way of working. The money we save can then be spent on those jobs that still can only be done by hand.



STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE FRIENDS OF THE HURTWOOD

Over the past few months, the Trustees have been developing a revised strategic plan looking at the way forward for the Friends of the Hurtwood over the next five years.

We recognise that the Hurtwood appeals to a wide range of users – walkers, horse riders, bikers, educational users and nature lovers.

The first part of the plan is therefore to encourage more community engagement from those groups, to find out what they want from the Hurtwood and, where possible, to deliver it.

We shall do this by creating a number of special interest groups starting with walkers and bikers. We shall find out what they like about the Hurtwood and what, if anything, they would like to see by way of any improvements.

The second part is to improve the user experience at the same time as mitigating risk, by improving the landscaping and paths, proactive management of trails and a limited amount of signage for recognised bike trails.

We have a limited amount of resources, in terms of people, equipment and money. To achieve our strategic objectives, we therefore need more:

- Equipment to enable us to do more ourselves, rather than rely on (and pay for) contractors
- Volunteers to help with minor projects and to assist in promoting the charity
- Income to cover our running costs and thus ensure the continued viability of the charity. We are looking at extending our membership base to increase income to replace the local authority grants which have largely ceased.

If you have some time available and would like to become involved with the Friends, please contact the Ranger, Mark Beaumont, by emailing: mark@hurtwoodcontrol.co.uk.

Richard Green

LASTING LEGACIES

If the Hurtwood has meant a lot to you during your life, please consider making Friends of the Hurtwood a beneficiary of your will so that future generations can enjoy this beautiful tract of heath and forest as well.

Making a will is quite straightforward. If you already have a will, it is even easier to add the Friends of the Hurtwood in a codicil. Legacies are a brilliant way of giving something back after years of pleasure in the Hurtwood.

NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING

Tuesday 4th April 2017 at 7.30pm, at the Duke of Kent School, Ewhurst
Download papers from www.friendsofthehurtwood.co.uk

THE HURTLEBERRY will take place on 17th September 2017