

Chairman's Letter

Dear Friends

This is my first contribution to the FotH newsletter as Chairman. Firstly, I would like to give thanks to my predecessor Peter Copping for his 15-year service to the Trust. Also, I must thank him for the time and support he has given me during our handover. As I was completely new to the Trust, it has been a pretty steep learning curve and Peter and the management team have been great support.

Let me introduce myself to those Friends who were not able to attend this year's AGM via Zoom. I have lived with my wife Helen and our two children in Farley Green for 14 years and have enjoyed walking, running and cycling on the Hurtwood, without ever becoming aware of the existence of Hurtwood Control/Friends of the Hurtwood; in fact I only discovered the website (and thereby the Chair vacancy) by accident when I was looking for new walks during lockdown!

Professionally I am a management consultant and had reached a point where I was looking to give something back to the local community and was delighted to take on the role as Chairman. I have worked away a great deal since we have lived here and Helen therefore knows far more people locally than I do. I am delighted that this role is giving me the opportunity to meet so many members of the community across the Surrey Hills.

I have been asked about my vision for the FotH: I find it helpful to remind myself of the objectives of the Charity, which I paraphrase as;

- 1: Provide and preserve public access
- 2: Protect the environment
- 3: Educate the public about the environment and its conservation

Through the summer we have found it quite challenging at times to balance these objectives. I think it is worth touching on some of these themes. The increase in visitor numbers has led to more wear and erosion on the area, which has increased our costs and the workload of our Ranger, Mark Beaumont. The increase in numbers has increased congestion in the villages, particularly Peaslake, and we have been asked if it would be possible to reduce access to the Hurtwood. The Board and Owners feel that this would be against the spirit of our first objective, particularly when at the height of the first lockdown many other areas of public access were closed.

Another issue that has been brought to our attention is the number of organised cycling events. Almost always these are based on roads or byways. Occasionally the organisers contact us in advance, but mostly we have to approach them for details and to ask for a donation! We do not authorise any of these events. The observation I



Friends of the Hurtwood

Administrators to the public rights of access to 2,500 acres of land in the parishes of Albury, Cranleigh, Ewhurst and Shere

Registered Charity 2000053

FotH

The Parish Office
St Mark's Churchyard
Peaslake GU5 9RR

01306 730100 (office answerphone)
07920 705070 (Ranger mobile)

www.foth.co.uk
<https://www.facebook.com/hurtwood.ranger>

Contacts:

Mark@foth.co.uk
chairman@foth.co.uk
administration@foth.co.uk
communications@foth.co.uk

would make is that in terms of conflict with other users, these events are less of a concern than the many unofficial groups of mountain bikers, of which we have no visibility at all.

Whilst these are uncertain times for any organisation that depends on donations for a large part of its income, overall the Trust is financially robust. My view is that the board's approach should be "steady as she goes" for the foreseeable future. We need to see how the economic and social impacts of Covid play out on our area, be that pressure on donations or local authority grants, increasing costs (driven by inflation and a higher level of flying tipping) and the impacts of increased usage on the area. We also need to pursue raising the profile of the Charity with the new users, to contribute to the costs associated with higher numbers, but do this without encouraging even more new usage.

I look forward to meeting more of the Friends in the coming year, so please feel free to contact me.

Antony Collins, FotH Chairman

Ranger's Report

It seems that visitor numbers are starting to return to more normal levels as life slowly begins to get back to some form of normality. However I suspect there will continue to be a general increase in visitor numbers, as people have started to reconnect with the countryside since lockdown. Overall this should be considered as welcome news, as we all know that exercise and being out in the fresh air is so good for us, though I've been surprised at the number of local residents taking their first steps onto the Hurtwood, despite it having been on their doorstep for so long.

It's been great to see different faces of all ages discovering new places; we are so fortunate to have this amazing amenity with such easy access and it's a privilege to have been able to offer the space to those less fortunate. It's very easy to take for granted how lucky we are and forget how Lockdown must have felt for those living in flats with no gardens or in built-up areas with little access to the countryside.

Car parks: The car parks have taken considerably more car usage over the past 18 months, but the remedial work we did in the spring seems to have held up and left them in generally good shape for the winter. We did open up the grassy area at the front of Walking Bottom car park to help take some of the extra cars, and try and help reduce parking problems within Peaslake village. This is now closed off for the winter as it gets too wet and will soon turn into a mud bath.

Fly tip: As always, this sadly continues to take up time and money, especially with the large quantities of asbestos still being dumped. You'll see from the photographs the variation in material types, from builders' waste to asbestos, garden waste, even 30 plastic pots, some looking unused! We also broke our current record for the most costly single incident of fly tipping clearance with twenty fridge freezers, this cost just under £1,500 to be removed! Its very hard to trace where it comes from but on more than one occasion there has been paperwork suggesting that it's come from





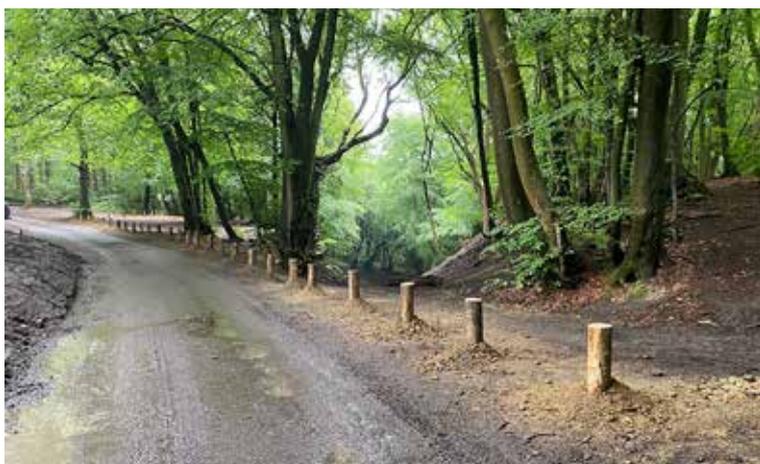
jobs in the south London area. As ever we urge anyone having building work or rubbish collected to make sure that they are using a genuine contractor and one that has the correct licence for removal of waste, whether it's for building work, house clearance or garden waste.

Access maintenance: Throughout the summer months the main activity for us on the maintenance schedule is cutting the vegetation back on all the main fire breaks as well as some of the more popular paths. Dry weather, particularly in spring, before the green bracken has come through, is always a concern with the risk of fire never far away. Keeping the fire breaks clear of vegetation is very important to give as much bare ground as possible to help prevent any fire spreading

from one compartment to another. It also has another useful purpose in providing softer ground away from the stones for horse riders.

Many people have commented on the loss of the view from the old iron bench looking east from near the top of Pitch Hill. It was becoming blocked by the growth from some Scots Pines further down the slope, so we have taken the first steps to reinstating the view and cut five of the trees for now and this has helped to open up the view considerably.

You may well be aware that we had a film crew on Winterfold for four weeks earlier this summer, working on a new TV series for the Disney Channel. We worked very closely with them from their initial interest in filming on the Hurtwood, working with the landowners and trying to facilitate and advise the film crew when needed. We also dealt with any of their requests and questions, mostly involving access and any areas of restrictions. This particular project has been highly beneficial for us, with them making a significant donation for my time and also when they've been doing reparations after



filming has finished. So we took the opportunity to reduce access to vehicles to the edge of Jelleys Hollow. It has been an increasing problem with dumping of fly tip directly down into the hollow, which you can imagine makes it that much harder for us to access. There is still parking available on the opposite side of the road though, so anyone wishing to visit can still do so. We also took the opportunity to move a gate onto Winterfold Heath slightly nearer to the road to make it harder for fly tipping, and add some Fittleworth stone to a deeply gullied footpath and resurface the access road onto the heath.

The Holmbury Hill Fort interpretation board has unfortunately fallen apart and is beyond repair, though considering it has been there in all weathers since 2005, I think it's fair to say its done pretty well. I'm currently trying to locate some of the original artwork so we can start afresh with a new board, and we will be replacing it as soon as possible.

Mark Beaumont: mob: 07920 705070, Office: 01306 730100, email: Mark@foth.co.uk

Peaslake Garden Party

Many thanks to Matt, Eileen and all the Hurtwood Inn staff for making the Peaslake Garden Party on September 12 such a success. And a big thank you to the organisers who decided to continue the Peaslake Fair tradition of donating proceeds to three local charities. Foth have been given £350.

It was a lovely opportunity for Peaslakers to come along and just enjoy getting together again, listening to music and catching up with friends they had not seen for ages. Everything worked brilliantly, and as Julie Barham commented: "whether we have the Fair again or not, another Garden Party would be a welcome addition to Peaslake's Summer Calendar!"





The Queen's Green Canopy

Do you remember the campaigns 'Plant a tree in '73', 'Plant some more in '74'? Next year will be **Plant a tree for the Jubilee**: The Queen is celebrating her 70th anniversary as monarch in 2022. She, along with Prince Charles, have launched what is called the Queen's Green Canopy as a Jubilee initiative with the slogan 'Plant a tree for the Jubilee'. Read more about it here <https://queensgreencanopy.org/>

In this year of growing concern about climate change, trees are being heralded as crucial to the reduction of CO2 in the atmosphere. You may already know that growing trees absorb more CO2 than mature trees.

Friends of the Hurtwood are starting a fundraising campaign amongst Foth members, Hurtwood landowners and the public at large to enable the planting of a small Queen's Green Canopy copse.

How much funding is raised will determine how many trees we can buy and plant. Our initial target is £ 2,400.00 for an identified site in Shere Heath which would enable us to plant 15 young trees and fund the infrastructure to support them as they become established.

Look on our website soon to find details on how to donate to this great cause.

Forest Bathing among the beautiful trees in the Hurtwood

Lisa Duncan, who lives at Sutton Place at the bottom of Holmbury Hill, has launched Forest Bathing in the Hurtwood - fully clothed, no swimming involved!

Forest Bathing was originally developed in Japan as a process of relaxation known as Shinrin Yoku and it is becoming increasingly popular in the West. It is a simple method of being calm and quiet amongst the trees, observing nature around you whilst breathing deeply which has been found to help both adults and children de-stress and boost health and wellbeing in a natural way.

Lisa is currently studying to become a Forest Bathing Guide through The Forest Bathing Institute.

"I love living here and being able to access the beautiful woodland of Holmbury Hill," she said. "This is one of the reasons I have decided to study Forest Bathing. Through living here for the past eight years, I have come to realise that having access to nature, and specifically the woodland, I have felt the wellbeing effects.

"In my research, I have found out how the aromatic oils from trees, like the Scots Pine, also have a positive physiological effect on our bodies. There is scientific evidence that these aromatic oils, called phytoncides, help our immune systems by increasing NK cells that attack viruses. What an amazing thing, especially in this age of Covid!"



In order to become a qualified Forest Bathing guide, Lisa needed to complete at least six case study sessions. These free sessions consisted of two-three hours in the woods, slowly walking and stopping at different points for mindfulness activities and meditation. The area covered during this walk is about a mile (a Forest Bathing walk aims to keep the heart rate down so as to be in a continuous relaxed state).

Lisa chose two areas, near the two ponds and near the Pinetum. The sessions simply involve walking slowly, stopping at different points (e.g. the pond, the canopy of trees, a tree stump, a particular tree, etc) doing a mindfulness activity, using sight, sound, smell and touch (such as sunlight, touching a tree bark, dried leaves, soil, etc).

So if you come across groups of people standing quietly looking up the trees, they may be enjoying a peaceful forest bath. Contact Lisa Duncan at lisanaomis@icloud.com





The Long Distance Walkers Association

"The Long Distance Walkers Association's London Group has a long association with Hurtwood, having organised their annual 26-mile 'Founders Challenge' walk for many years, using Peaslake as the base. Last year (the group's 25th anniversary), they decided to plant a memorial tree (an English oak) on Pitch Hill to commemorate departed group members. They had intended to celebrate with a walk to the 'Founders Tree', but it had to be postponed due to Covid. However, the walk took place on October 9 this year, and 30 members walked up to the tree after lunch at the Hurtwood Inn."

Colin Saunders, LDWA



Car Park Blitzes – volunteers needed

FotH needs to increase its membership and fund-raising, so now Covid restrictions are lifted we will be organising more car park blitzes.

These are incredibly effective in spreading the word about the Friends and increasing donations. So many visitors and even local residents are ignorant of the existence of FotH and what it achieves. Typically we ask people if they know about us, are already supporters and donate? If not, then we make the case for helping with one-off or, preferably, regular donations. Our recently updated leaflet and the new website help to make the case.

If you would like to help with the blitzes please contact Nancy Loates-Taylor at:
communications@foth.co.uk

Social Media update

"Our social media presence continues to grow with many of our local residents and visitors enjoying our posts of just some of the fantastic views and scenes around the Hurtwood. We now have hundreds of likes and follows on Facebook and nearly 1000 followers on Instagram! We also post useful updates such as path or car park closures. So, if you don't follow us already please do, it will help us all stay informed with what's happening when and what we have been up to. We would like to thank all of those who have sent us media, please keep them coming!

Don't forget to tag us in your media with the hashtag **#friendsofthehurtwood**."

Alexander MacKinnon

WHY NOT MAKE A FRIEND A FRIEND!

Visit our website: <https://foth.co.uk/friends> and become a Friend through a regular annual or monthly donation by direct debit. A direct debit ensures that our administration costs are minimised and if the donor qualifies for Gift Aid, this adds an extra 25% to the donation.

Autumn in the Hurtwood

This is the time to look for fungi in the hurtwood, but please don't eat anything you are not 100% sure about.

These beauties are some of the species you may find. Very few are safely edible so always take identification seriously.



False Chanterelle

Fly Agaric *amanita muscaria*



Birch Boletus *leccinum scabrum*



**Shaggy Inkcap
or Lawyer's Wig
*coprinus comatus***



Amethyst Deceiver *laccaria amethystea*



- Provide a full time Ranger, **Mark Beaumont**
- Manage 30 miles of registered footpaths and bridleways, 30 miles of unofficial tracks, a network of firebreaks and 14 car parks, to provide unrivalled public access across the Hurtwood.
- Protect and conserve the natural environment.
- Create and preserve wildlife habitats.
- Maintain the panoramic views from the tops of the Hurtwood hills.
- Clear and prevent litter and fly tipping.
- Protect three scheduled monuments including Holmbury Hill Iron Age Hill Fort.
- Promote educational activities to encourage children to treasure the countryside.



**Please
support
FotH**

**Thank
you!**



THE BENEFIT OF LEGACIES

Over the years, the charity has been generously supported by a number of benefactors who have made bequests from their estates. These gifts have enabled us to meet some major commitments which would be out of reach if funded from membership donations alone.

Here are two recent examples of this:

- We have been able to upgrade our tractor so that the ranger can carry out a much greater variety of work on the Hurtwood without recourse to external contractors;
- We have carried out some restoration work on the Hill Fort at Holmbury Hill so that visitors can see its outlines more easily.

If we did not have the benefit of capital gifts we would soon find ourselves without the resources to enhance the Hurtwood for the enjoyment of all.

When you next come to write or update your will, do please consider including a bequest to Friends of the Hurtwood (Registered Charity no 200053), to help us keep the Hurtwood accessible for all to enjoy.