

## Chairman's Letter

### Dear Friends

This is my last contribution to the newsletter as Chairman because I shall be standing down following the Annual meeting in April after almost 15 years as a Trustee/Director of FotH and 10 years as Chairman. The search for my successor has been delegated to a small sub-committee of the Trustee Board led by David Wright. I have no doubt that an announcement will be made as soon as this process is complete and their recommendation approved by the Trustee Board.

The Hurtwood continued to be a popular place to visit as Autumn turned into Winter, even as movement restrictions tightened up again prior to Christmas. As we entered the latest version of lockdown after Christmas visitor numbers did begin to decline. But there is still plenty of evidence to suggest that many people still travel way outside of their local area to visit the Hurtwood, some of them in groups much larger than currently permitted. Our Ranger, and indeed the local communities, do what they can to discourage inappropriate activity. The police have been called to the Hurtwood on more than one occasion but appears they are reluctant to do more than to issue warnings and disperse large groups.

On a more positive note, as the race to vaccinate begins to overtake the rate of growth of the virus we should soon return to some state of normality, when we can look forward to more degrees of freedom. Perhaps this will be soon after Easter with even more relaxation of restrictions before the summer begins. It is however inevitable that the Hurtwood will be busier with its wonders now on a wider visitor map.

The demand on our Ranger and our finances can only increase as visitor numbers go up. It follows that FotH will only be able to be effective in managing the consequences of increasing visitor numbers with the continuing support of our donors. In this context we were delighted with the response to our recent mailout "we need your help". Many of our donors responded by increasing their regular donation; we also received a number of very generous one-off donations, for which we are extremely grateful.

Now more than ever before we need to find ways to encourage every visitor to donate, ideally on a regular basis. We know there are many locals who regularly enjoy the Hurtwood yet many remain completely unaware of FotH and all the work that goes on behind the scenes to maintain public access. We have long held the ambition to increase our income to have the confidence to recruit a deputy to Mark, our Ranger. Having an extra pair of hands will enable FotH to do so much more (and allow Mark to take more weekends off!). Last year, with this ambition in mind, the 'recruit a friend' campaign was launched when the new Member emailing system was introduced.

This campaign has already encouraged more of the biker community that ride the Hurtwood to donate. So, how about you walkers and horse riders also stepping up to encourage at least one of your friends to donate and join FotH?

**Peter Copping, FotH Chairman**

### 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](http://www.foth.co.uk)  
<https://www.facebook.com/hurtwood.ranger>

#### Contacts:

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## The impact of ten times our normal visitor numbers

As I write this on a beautiful sunny, February day, the high visitor numbers continue, as they have done throughout the winter. I'm pleased to see so many people getting to enjoy the outdoors and discover new places, but it would just be nice if they didn't leave any trace of their visit. Sadly, litter is always an issue at the best of times but with an approximate tenfold increase in visitor numbers, you can imagine the impact.



### Car parks were worst affected by the high numbers

In terms of day-to-day management, the new visitors have little impact other than asking directions when lost. The most significant impact is the increased wear to the car park surfaces. These have not fared well over the winter months and the freezing week we had in early February has caused considerable damage, especially to No. 1 car park on Holmbury Hill. There has always been a problem with the entrance slope for as long as I can remember, quite possibly there's an underground spring that's causing the problem, but normally just re-grading the entrance every 18 months does the trick.



Currently though, since the ground started to thaw, it became so bad that I had to close it until Martin Nicholson could come and do the repairs with his big machine. The main slope had just turned to a complete sloppy sandy mess, making it quite difficult for cars to get up, and those that did get up it just made the situation much worse. We have managed to resurface the entrance to the Pitch Hill car park just to remove the worst of the potholes, but again the freezing weather hasn't helped, but it's considerably better than it was.

### Walking Bottom drainage work

We have also carried out works to the main part of Walking Bottom car park to help prevent the flow of water from the hill going directly through the car park and onto the road. All the main ditches have been dug out and sand traps dug at intervals along the ditches to try and reduce the sand movement too. The entrance



to Walking Bottom had become badly eroded, and particularly so in the last year, I presume due to the increased usage. This has meant we've had to import a large quantity of sandstone from West Sussex, 70 tons to be precise. It never fails to amaze me just how quickly such a large volume of stone can be used in relatively small areas, though the surface had to be built up by about 10" to bring the levels high enough to cover the nearly exposed concrete drainage pipes and also to prevent the flow of water to the road. Again we were not helped by the weather, but hopefully by now the slightly sloppy mess will have dried and the improvements can be seen.

### Fly tipping becoming even more serious and more dangerous

Unfortunately, since the last newsletter, fly tipping has been a serious issue and so far only four months into our financial year we have spent our entire annual fly tip budget twice over! In a recent incident on Shere Heath at the beginning of February, there was probably our largest single fly tip, filling a 20 ton lorry to capacity. This load also included a quantity of corrugated roofing material. This contained a small amount of asbestos, so it had to be sorted and weighed separately. This meant I had to sift through the rubbish piece by piece, to make sure it was all removed - certainly not anyone's idea of a fun day. Since then, we've had another load of tip on Winterfold which contains the more toxic asbestos pipe.



This meant I had to get in specialist contractors to remove it before the remaining general rubbish could be removed, so unfortunately for them, they got to sift through it all.

### Holmbury Hill Fort

Work is continuing on the Hill Fort despite the fact we've been hampered by the bad weather which seems to be timing itself to arrive on the days I have contractors booked in to do the work. Having said that, it's probably no bad thing to spread the work out over a few years. The main part of the inner fort is looking so much better now and I'm gradually getting on top of the bracken by continual mowing rather than resorting to spraying.

Work is progressing on the interpretation board for the old Prisoner of War Camp at Holmbury St Mary. It is hoped to have it in place by May.

**Mark Beaumont**

**Mob: 07920 705070 Office: 01306 730100**

**Mark@foth.co.uk**



### Yes we had snow!

With spring flowers everywhere it's hard to remember that only a few weeks ago the Hurtwood was covered in snow.

Out came the toboggans on The Glade in Holmbury St Mary as families made the most of the snow. It didn't last long but it made the woodland look utterly magical.

## DIARY DATES FOR SPRING 2021



**FRIDAY**  
**2nd APRIL**  
From 9.30am

**CRANLEIGH RDA SPONSORED RIDE**  
Start points at Farley Heath and Albury Heath  
<http://www.cranleighrdagroup.co.uk/>



**FRIDAY**  
**9th APRIL**  
7.00pm

**FRIENDS OF THE HURTWOOD ANNUAL MEETING**  
on **Zoom**. An invitation and joining code will be sent to all members nearer the time.



**SATURDAY**  
**17th JULY**

**FREEDOM RACING 'HURTWOOD 50' RUNNING EVENT**  
Watch out for runners on Holmbury and Pitch Hills  
<https://freedom-racing.co.uk/hurtwood-50>



**MONDAY**  
**31st AUGUST**  
1-4.30pm

\* **POSSIBLY THE PEASLAKE FAIR**  
Make a note in your diaries just in case



**SATURDAY**  
**7th NOVEMBER**

\* **HOLMBURY BONFIRE & FIREWORKS**  
Details will be in the Autumn Newsletter and the Foth facebook page

\* The organisers of these events give generous donations to Foth.  
\* Please support them.

### Giving back to the Hurtwood



Coffee entrepreneur and keen cyclist Ben Cooper has extended his coffee product range to include a version called **Love Hurts**, in honour of the Hurtwood. Ben wants to give back to the area where he has experienced such pleasure cycling on hills and roads. For each bag of **Love Hurts** coffee that he sells, he is donating £1 per 250g. This is an innovation for driving more donations to the Friends of the Hurtwood to help fund maintenance of the area.

"The Hurtwood means such a lot to me," he said, "It's about community, meeting friends, open spaces and freedom in one of the most beautiful parts of the world. We are so lucky to have it."

"It's completely different from say the South Downs. The Hurtwood is the Swiss Army Knife of country side - it opens up opportunities: you can go for a walk, take the dog or all the family, access the viewpoints easily from the car parks or go for a 30k mountain bike adventure. And it's a great central place to meet your friends from London and Brighton. Creating **Love Hurts** coffee is literally a labour of love."

The Barista Project, Ben's company, sells the coffee through local stockists and online. The coffee comes as ground filter coffee or as whole bean. Have a look at his website to order direct or watch out for it in local shops.



Demonstrations and tastings are available for stockists and retailers, plus full Barista training for any commercial customers. [www.TheBaristaProject.co.uk](http://www.TheBaristaProject.co.uk)



### Survey of members to find primary reasons for visiting the Hurtwood

Analysis of 205 individual replies to survey emailed to 376 members on 21 Oct. All responses up to 5th Nov are included in analysis.

Notes:

- 1) Total number of members surveyed 376  
-Representing total donations of: £26,592
- 2) Members not surveyed (no emails): 30

Activity	Responses	% of responses	Annualised donations by activity	Donation by activity %
Walking/Dog walking	115	56%	£8,513	60%
Mountain biking	64	31%	£4,030	28%
Horse riding	4	2%	£230	2%
Running	9	4%	£575	4%
Orienteering	0	0%	£0	0%
Other	9	4%	£415	3%
Carriage driving	4	2%	£450	3%
Totals	205	100%	£14,213	100%

205 responses as % of total number of members surveyed: 55%

£14,213 as a % of total annualised donations: 53%

### Forestry update

Remember those areas of Winterfold cordoned off by red plastic tape to keep people and dogs away from hurts affected by a devastating algae-like organism called a water mould? This spring it has been found again in trees on Holmbury Hill.

Forestry manager Alex Wilks from Batcheller Monkhouse said the culprit was *Phytophthora*, the 'plant-destroyer', from the Greek φυτὸν (phytón) meaning 'plant' and φθορά (phthorá) meaning 'destruction'.



"Phytophthora Ramorum is a disease particularly affecting larch trees," he said. "Many forest owners have lost large areas of larch to this disease, and sporadic cases have been spotted in the hurts across the woodlands, usually next to paths which indicates it is probably spread on feet/bike tyres. In the hurts it causes dead patches. Rhododendrons can be a host plant which is why the Forestry Commission encourage landowners to remove the plants wherever possible, including on the Shere Manor Estate. Fortunately for the Shere Manor Estate it has very few larch trees (cue Monty Python fans) but it does have a number in the Pinetum on Holmbury Hill which have grown very well - up until now.

### Telltale signs of Phytophthora damage on the leaves of a plant



**Damage to larch**

"Sadly the Estate has been served a plant health notice by the Forestry Commission, as a random inspection spotted this disease in those trees. The larch will have to be removed and every trace burnt on site. This work will be done shortly. It will leave a bare patch in the Pinetum and consideration will be given as to what to replant in that area.

"Elsewhere, the younger trees on the Estate which naturally reseeded following clear-felling have on the whole grown very well and some of the earlier blocks are really starting to gain height. I was asked why strips had been cut through some of these. These cut strips are called 'racks' and will enable forestry machinery to operate within the blocks over the life cycle of these trees, to gradually thin the crop until one day (in 50 years or so) the trees reach maturity and the whole cycle starts all over again. 'Sustainable Forestry' in action.

"In other news, the general forestry programme continues with more thinning and improvement of the woodlands, with the Estate striving to achieve the best balance between commercial and sustainable timber production and benefit to wildlife and people. I suspect like many

regulars to the Estate, I have been amazed by the increased volume of visitors over the past year, lockdowns or no. This has put a lot of pressure on car parks etc, so a quick thank you from me to the Friends, and Mark in particular for his hard work. It will be interesting to see if this trend continues over the next year or two."

**Alex Wilks, Batcheller Monkhouse**

## 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.

## Car Park Blitzes – volunteers needed

FotH needs to increase its membership and fund-raising, so once 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**



- 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.