

Chairman's Letter

Dear Friends

The onset of Spring is my favourite time of the year on the Hurtwood, with so much to look forward to. Also I find time spent out on the area (preferably without a mobile phone) is a precious counter-balance to the mayhem of the modern world!

I have to report that whilst the Friends of the Hurtwood is financially robust, having good reserves on the balance sheet, we continue to struggle to raise sufficient funds to cover our day-to-day running costs. This is primarily due to the fact that, over the last couple of years, our costs have gone up in line with general inflation, whilst our revenue has not kept pace with this rise. Specifically, donations from members and grants from councils have both dropped and so not increased in line with inflation.

The Board is actively pursuing options to redress this issue: The new digital collection points in Peaslake Store and the Hurtwood Inn have had an immediate positive impact and, if they continue to be effective, we will look to roll them out into other areas of the Hurtwood. I will be writing to all members individually on the subject of donations and will update further at the Annual Meeting in April.

The rest of this newsletter will update on the many developments and work done in the last six months. I would like to thank all members of the management team and particularly Mark Beaumont of their efforts over this period.



Antony Collins, Foth Chairman

Coronation Weekend Activities in the Hurtwood

Bank Holiday Monday, May 8, has been nominated as the '**Big Help Out**' Day for everyone to get involved in their local community. Friends of the Hurtwood is taking part in two different ways and we are hoping that lots of our Hurtwood Friends will support us and get involved in our activities.

– The **Big Help Out** event is being held on Shere Recreation Ground from 12 noon – 2pm on the Bank Holiday Monday and it will include fun activities, stalls for organisations to publicise what they do for the community, plus food and drink. The directors of Friends of the Hurtwood will be running a stall and will be explaining the role of Foth and the huge benefit of having such a stunning area of countryside open for everyone to enjoy. Come and visit us!

If you're feeling energetic and would like to help out in the actual Hurtwood, a '**Green and Clean**' initiative is taking place between 2–4pm when litter will be collected to improve specified areas where it is a problem. Volunteers will be provided with a high visibility vest, rubbish bags, disposable gloves and at the end of the session, tea, drinks and cake!

– We will be organising the **Green and Clean** from a base in Walking Bottom car park and sending volunteers to various sites around the area. Everyone is welcome – families with children, folks on their own, people wanting to make a difference. It would help if you bring your own litter picker gadget if you have one.

Check the website before the Coronation weekend for final locations and instructions. Any questions, please email communications@foth.co.uk

Nancy Loates-Taylor



Ranger's Report

If I may start where I left off from my last report in the Autumn 2022 newsletter, we have now planted the memorial tree for Peter Haynes, my predecessor. Having discussed it with Peter's widow Lin, we decided a copper beech was most suitable. Peter was a huge cricket fan and member of Holmbury St Mary Cricket Club, so it was only fitting that the memorial tree should be planted beside the grounds. Despite a bitterly cold afternoon it was good to see the family there to help plant the tree in Peter's memory. (See report and pictures page)



Fly tipping has been on the increase again after a generally quieter summer. Unfortunately this has included considerable quantities of asbestos. It would appear that this is all coming from the same people and is associated with roofing works. I understand from Waverly Borough Council that they too have been having similar problems on their land, and quite possibly by the same people.



Last year, due to the works being carried out by Thames Water we were unable to empty the fly tip compound at the reservoir. Their work has now been completed so we have managed to get it emptied as we've been able to get lorries in and out again. This was done at great cost, needing three 20 ton lorry loads to remove it all. Unfortunately it was only a matter of days before we started to fill it again. Something I don't often mention is that we do get quite a considerable quantity of tree surgery waste dumped in the car parks. Whilst its not as costly to remove as fly-tipped rubbish, it still takes time to load it all up and burn.



On December 1, the last site for the Queens Green Canopy project was cleared and made ready for a small plantation of 15 copper beech trees. This is just south of the pond in Walking Bottom.

We did also have plans to obtain a grant to reline the Walking Bottom pond adjacent to the new plantation, but sadly this option is no longer available to us and I'm looking at alternative ways of repairing the pond. I suspect we will go back to the same method we've done in the past, of digging it all out again and relining with a thick layer of clay. Whilst this has always been an option, it's not the best method as it ultimately will get rup-

tured at some point and start to leak. I may have the possibility to source some clay for free, so at the relatively minor cost of the labour, I think it will, on balance, be worthwhile. I know many of you have commented on the lack of water in there and would appreciate to see it full again, I know lots of dogs that certainly would.

We now have two new electronic donation tins! These are the modern equivalent of the loose change tin, except you are able to use your chosen payment card and simply tap the device. The new donation points allow someone to make one-off donations of either a set amount or an amount of their choice. So far they have been placed in the Peaslake Village Shop and on the bar of the Hurtwood Inn. We often hear from users on the Hurtwood that they want an easy and informal way to donate. So now whilst topping up on refreshments its very easy just to tap your card and make a small donation.

As long as we can get within a mobile phone signal, we will also be able to use these donation points as remote units when we attend any events throughout the year.



Throughout the winter we've been doing lots of cutting back on the main rides. This makes the job of cutting the grass on the rides with the tractor much easier in the summer and also helps create warm sunny corridors for butterflies. It's also very important to increase the width of the rides as this goes towards helping the prevention of spread of fire from one compartment to another. We have also recently cleared the views from the summit of Pitch Hill and the view to the East from the old iron bench. This is part of a regular cutting back schedule on an approximate 4-5 yearly basis. Of all the tasks we carry out, this

is probably the one that I get the most feedback from, and its always good to hear I'm on the right track.

We have also extensively cut back tree re-growth from the north west side of the Peaslake cemetery track. This was done following a request from the Peaslake Community Council, and this has now opened up the view from the seat looking towards the church and north.

The entrance to No 1 car park had unfortunately completely broken up following a long period of stability. The dry summer certainly helped keeping it firm, plus the added compaction of the Thames Water lorries using it. After a wet spell in November followed by some deep penetrating frosts in December and January, and then a quick thaw, it soon turned to mush. I managed to get it repaired just in time for the major orienteering event in February and you should now have no trouble driving up into the car park again.



I've been working with a group of local mountain bikers, who have been doing a great job in carrying out repair works to some of the more popular bike trails both on Holmbury and Pitch Hills. This has not been for the creation of any new trails but this work is required to help maintain the surface of the existing trails, and allow all skill levels of riders to be able to enjoy the Hurtwood.

As always, please do let me know if you want to report anything you think I may need to attend to and I'll do my utmost to get it sorted as soon as possible.

Mark Beaumont, Hurtwood Ranger

Memorial to former Hurtwood Ranger Peter Haynes

Family and friends gathered on the path behind Holmbury St Mary cricket pitch on December 3 to plant a tree in memory of Peter Haynes, who was the ranger for the Hurtwood from 1991-2006.

He lived in Holmbury for 37 years. He was a terrific wildlife photographer and introduced many people to the wildlife abundant in the woods.

The tree chosen for Peter's memorial is a copper beech.



Peter Haynes



Handa and Ben Bray

Social media update

We now have over 1,200 followers on Instagram and 1,100 on Facebook. Thank you to each of you who interacts with us online.

It's not just about sharing the lovely pictures and news of what's been happening around the Hurtwood. It also helps us raise our profile further afield to encourage people to start or continue donating to keep the Hurtwood open to all.

Our regular donations have been decreasing while costs have risen sharply, particularly recently. To help counteract this you may have noticed our new collection points in the Peaslake Stores and the Hurtwood inn. These have proven useful as an easy way to round up your shop or donate the cost of an extra pint to support our activities.

If you don't yet follow us on social media, please do!
#FotH

Alex Mackinnon



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.

We are most grateful to our recent benefactors David Seligman and J R Huntingford for their bequests received in February and March 2022.

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.

Lords of the sky

A piercing, mewing 'peeay' cry is a common sound on and around the Hurtwood. Look up and you should see the bird responsible, soaring effortlessly on broad wings spanning more than 4ft. They are likely to be buzzards. Graceful masters of the air, they are surprisingly large thickset birds when seen up close, sitting in trees. They breed successfully on the Hurtwood and when the youngsters are learning to fly with their parents there is a cacophony of 'peeaying' as they circle together in the wind, wings outstretched.

Gamekeepers and pesticides brought the buzzard close to extinction in the early 20th century but it has since made a remarkably strong comeback.

The Hurtwood is perfect for them as they like a patchwork of open fields and woodland.

Buzzards principally eat small rodents, but also take birds, reptiles, amphibians, larger insects and earthworms. They also eat carrion.

If the cry you hear is less 'peeay' and more a series of high pitched 'wheoo, wheea, wheeas', the bird is probably another of Britain's raptors – a red kite. If you have difficulty distinguishing 'peeay' from 'wheoo', the best way of telling these two magnificent birds apart is by looking at their tails.



Buzzards have fairly unimpressive spatulate tails while red kites have flamboyant longtails, fanning out to make a fork. Kites are more slender than the Buzzard and also have a longer wing span of close to 5ft 6in. Up to the late 1980s, kites were thought to be surviving in just the odd areas of remote moorland but since then they have been successfully reintroduced and the M4 is one of the red kite's favourite hunting grounds. Like the buzzard, they like a mix of farmland and woodland and they have spread now right across Surrey and are a familiar sight around the Hurtwood.

They are mainly carrion eaters, but are quite capable of killing small mammals and birds. Roadkill pheasants, rabbits and squirrels form an important part of their diet.

Another piercing cry that is not instantly recognisable comes from a bird that has never been native to the British Isles but is fast becoming very much at home here – the parakeet. It makes a raucous screech. How did it come here? Rumours include Jimi Hendrix releasing them to 'bring some psychedelic colour to London's skyline' and a small number of the birds escaping from Shepperton Studios in 1951, during the making of *The African Queen*. Parakeets have been popular pets since Victorian times and inevitably many birds have escaped or been deliberately released over the years. Some have also escaped from aviaries. During the storm of 1987, a group made their getaway from Northdown Park, in Kent, and it is thought that a piece of a plane's fuselage dropped onto an aviary near Gatwick, leaving its inhabitants to make a bid for freedom.

They feed on a wide variety of fruit, berries, nuts, seeds and grain, and have also struck gold with the increasing number of people putting bird feeders in their garden.

Whatever way they came, they are steadily making their way across Surrey and last summer a flock was seen (and heard) squabbling noisily in the trees around Shere Heath.



Fund raising for the Hurtwood

As you will have noted in the Chairman's comments on page 1, we need to keep raising funds to cover the day to day running costs of our work in the Hurtwood.

This summer we are aiming to target the key places where visitors enter the Hurtwood to raise the profile of Foth and explain the importance of preserving the landscape and maintaining high quality access as well as encourage donations and membership.

We call these '**Car Park Blitzes**' and they have always been very productive in generating funds and members. To make them a success, we need volunteers who are willing to engage with people who are visiting the Hurtwood area and using the car parks. Many folks who visit the Hurtwood aren't members and we want to encourage them to donate to our charity to maintain this beautiful area of natural beauty.

During the Blitzes we approach visitors who are arriving by car or on foot, or who are preparing to leave. We politely ask how they have enjoyed their visit and would they like to donate to the help with the upkeep of the paths and car parks. With the electronic Collectin units we can take a donation from a card, phone or even accept cash.

We generally do stints of around an hour collecting funds and getting people interested in joining Foth. You will be accompanied by experienced members of the management committee who will provide you with a high viz vest, leaflets to distribute and a script (if you need it). It's your chance to share your passion and enthusiasm for the area with visitors.

If you are available to participate, please contact communications@foth.co.uk and we will find a date when you can join in. We are planning to do two **Car Park Blitzes** a month during May, June, July and August.



- 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!



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

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