

Chairman's Letter

Dear Friends

It was great that so many Friends were able to attend the Annual Meeting in April. I would like to thank Handa Bray for providing the refreshments.

You will remember I spoke at the Annual Meeting and subsequently wrote to you about our need to increase donations if possible. I am pleased to report that many Friends were able to assist in this appeal, thank you for your support and generosity. I am pleased to report we have also agreed management fee increases with almost all landowners. Whilst this is a great help, we will still finish the year with a deficit which will have been covered from reserves.

Details of the various events will appear elsewhere in the newsletter, but I wanted to give thanks to Nancy Loates-Taylor for organising the Coronation Weekend events and the series of Clean and Green sessions, they have been very successful. I would also like to thank Zoe Horton for leading the Car Parking team at Peaslake Village Fair and for all the team who helped on the FotH Stand at the Fair.

On Oct 8 I was very pleased to represent the FotH at the formal unveiling and handover of an information board commemorating the training and assessment school (STS 4/STS 7) of the Special Operations Executive (SOE) at Winterfold, Cranleigh 1941-1944. We made a 50% contribution to the cost of the board, which was presented to another FotH Director, Jim McAllister, as the landowner. The board will be located in Car Park 4 on Reynard's Hill, being the nearest point to the school location on the Hurtwood. The story researched by The Secret WW2 Learning Network is on page 4.

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 for their efforts over this period.

Antony Collins, FotH Chairman

The new Millennium Pinetum Information Board

No excuse for muddling your firs, pines and cedars now this fine information board has been installed outside the Millennium Pinetum near Car Park One on Holmbury Hill.

It shows clearly the profiles of the different species with their widely varying growth habits, and where they are to be found in the plantation. The Pinetum featuring 40 different species was created to celebrate the Millennium in 2000. A few years ago the Ginkgo Biloba sadly died, and in 2021 several larches had to be felled and burned as they had succumbed to Phytophthora disease.

The information board was looking tired anyway and it needed updating.

A Friend of the Hurtwood supporter, Tim Taylor, a graphics artist and 4D illustrator - tim@taylormade3d.co.uk has reconstructed the board, now with its 39 tree species clearly identifiable and with their locations marked on the Pinetum map.



Ranger's Report

It's not often I get to say that we've had a rather uneventful last six months, but hopefully I won't be tempting fate! The summer has mostly been taken up with the general ride maintenance and the routine grass mowing programmes. The only significant difference was having to do some of it twice. Presumably the rather damp summer we had this year made for good growing conditions. This will also impact the amount of ride edge cutting through the coming winter months too.

We had a few trees down over the summer with the most significant loss being a large oak on the side of Jelley's Hollow. Losing a tree of that size has an impact on the whole look and feel of the hollow, but it's all part of the continuing movement of life in the natural world. Arguably, it may in part be due to the erosion of soil from around the base, worn away by countless footsteps, but the hollow itself has been shaped by man for hundreds of years. It was a bit difficult to get the tractor in there to remove the main trunk, which we had to do as otherwise it would have blocked the bridleway, a Statutory Right of Way.



Wind-blown trees are considered the most dangerous trees to clear, often referred to as 'widow makers' for good reason.

Fortunately this one was relative easily to dismantle as the root was so far out of the ground.



It's also not uncommon for a branch to split out from the top of a tree, but get hung up, and not make its way down to the ground.

If this happens near a path where it could possibly fall on someone as they pass underneath, albeit very unlikely, we do try to get these down if we can.

An oak limb hanging above the Holmbury St Mary cricket pitch car park, was one of these.





Oil cans



Asbestos

Fly tipping continued through the summer too, though in smaller quantities than in previous years. We still get asbestos sheeting dumped, which is more expensive to clear than the average rubbish. Curiously we've had a number of incidents of old chip oil containers being dumped. I'd assumed, wrongly, that this was probably a mobile catering van just dumping as they passed through, but apparently the truth is quite bizarre. A lot of catering establishments leave their old used oil outside ready for collection by specialist firms, which is understandable as you'd imagine it's worthless. It isn't worthless, however, and it is being stolen and then converted into bio fuel which can then power a diesel vehicle.

You may have noticed that the grassy area on the front of Walking Bottom car park was being used for car parking on busier days. This was in response to a request from Peaslake Community Council asking if there was anything we could do to help reduce cars parking in the village centre.

Our regular inspection and maintenance of Bookhurst Wood in Cranleigh continues, mostly contained to litter picking and removing fallen trees from blocking paths in the wood.

The Pinetum Interpretation Panel had finally decided its time was up, having rotted and the panel had become unreadable. Unfortunately I couldn't find the original artwork so we enlisted the help of Tim Taylor to redraw the panel and now we have a new one installed. I've also started to make initial cuts through the Pinetum to make a walkable path through it so you can better see the trees.

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.

Ranger Mark Beaumont



Photo by Annalees Lim

Creativity on Holmbury Hill

Katie Green collaborated with film-maker Dan Martin, as part of her research into a new choreography and archaeology project called *A Gathering Place*, supported by the National Lottery through Arts Council England as part of the Developing Your Creative Practice programme.

Initial research focused on prehistoric and particularly Iron Age archaeology, and resulted in the creation of three films including *A Gathering Place* (9.52) created with Ella Fleetwood and Lucy Starkey at Holmbury Hill: <https://vimeo.com/854824800>

Next year she plans to develop a programme of creative community activity exploring the archaeology of key sites in each area. She aims to encourage local people's deeper engagement with the history of the place where they live and greater attentiveness to extraordinary landscapes. Keep in touch at: <https://www.instagram.com/madebykg/> <http://www.facebook.com/madebykatiegreen> <https://twitter.com/madebyKG>

Winterfold House - wartime school for secret agents

A new information board should soon be installed in Car Park 4 on Reynards Hill at the junction of Horseblock Hollow and Greensand Lane, Winterfold, shedding light on a fascinating period in its history.

Winterfold was one of the many large houses in Surrey requisitioned during the Second World War for military or medical use but few people now are aware of its important contribution to the war effort.

In January 1941, Winterfold was requisitioned as a Special Training School (STS) by Britain's wartime Special Operations Executive (SOE), a secret organisation formed in 1940 to undertake subversion and sabotage in enemy-occupied territory in Europe.

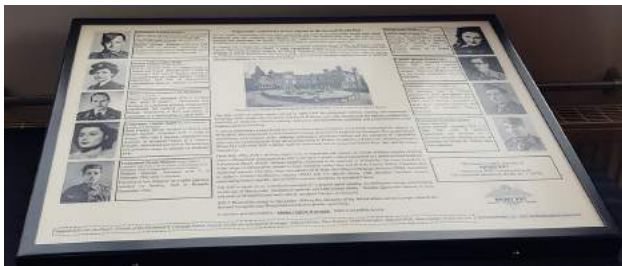


SOE was instructed by Prime Minister Winston Churchill to 'set Europe ablaze' and the stately home of Winterfold saw hundreds of trainee agents, mostly French, Dutch, Belgian and British pass through its doors. The most famous of those who passed through Winterfold was the incredibly brave secret agent Violette Szabó who was posthumously awarded the George Cross. Her story was made into the classic 1958 Lewis Gilbert film *Carve Her Name With Pride*. Many other recruits served heroically in occupied Europe. Many, like Violette, did not return.

Only in recent years has it come to light that Violette's selection and initial training took place at Winterfold. The house returned to private ownership after 1944, so it is not open to visitors, but the board will keep its wartime history alive.

The information board is a 2023

initiative of SECRET WW2 – the Secret WW2 Learning Network, a UK registered educational charity, no. 1156796 – and has been generously supported by Jim McAllister, Friends of The Hurtwood and Cranleigh Parish Council. It was officially unveiled at a ceremony at Cranleigh Arts Centre on October 8. Its exact location in the carpark can be found via the **What3words link: <https://w3w.co/during.finalists.glare>**. Mark the ranger discovered that if you miss the 's' off 'finalists' you are directed to a site in Myanmar! For more information about the wartime activities at Winterfold visit: www.secret-ww2.net www.facebook.com/secretww2net



Pitch Hill Bench has gone for repairs

The old iron bench at the top of Pitch Hill that looked east over the Weald had become detached from its concrete base and was dangerous to anyone trying to sit on it.

It has now been dismantled and taken to Martin Nicholson in Peaslake for repairs.



Shere's first Eco Fair was a success

Friends of the Hurtwood led by Nancy Loates-Taylor and supported by Surrey County and Guildford Borough Councillor Bob Hughes (pictured below) flew the flag for our beautiful countryside at Shere's first Eco Fair organised by St James' Church. They explained the importance of protecting the local landscape to a steady stream of visitors browsing the stands in the church on September 17.



Shere is committed to being an Eco Church, and the eco weekend, organised by Jenny Janse, from Peaslake, focused on how people could help the natural world, the climate and themselves. St James' came alive with pre-loved clothing, artwork, vegan food, craft wares and stalls for conservation and wildlife charities.

These included Surrey Wildlife Trust, Tillingbourne Earth, Guildford Environmental Forum and the Dorking branch of Extinction Rebellion. There were also several groups focused upon recycling/reuse and specific protection of badgers, the dormouse, bees and birds.

Outside children made bug hotels, painted stones and made fat balls for their bird feeders.

"It was hugely inspiring to run," said Jenny, "We were absolutely thrilled with how many people came to the events (at least 250 people of all ages), with the conversations and the open attitudes to finding out just how crucial the next few months and years are in our race to slash CO2 emissions, to achieve Net Zero and rebuild biodiversity."

Raising awareness and fundraising

Over the summer the directors and volunteers of Friends of the Hurtwood charity has been undertaking awareness and fundraising activities in the Hurtwood.

On selected Saturdays or Sundays we have been having "Car Park Blitzs" where we engage with users of the free car parks. Our representatives explain to visitors what the charity does in maintaining the Hurtwood and how we rely on donations from users. Many cyclists, dog walkers and horse riders are happy to contribute to maintain open access to the 2,000 + acres of the Hurtwood.

Visit our website www.foth.co.uk for more information or visit us on Facebook and Instagram. We're always pleased to see photos posted that visitors have taken when in the Hurtwood.



The Wellerness

A group initiated in West Sussex, The Wellerness is now starting to have events in the Surrey Hills including in the Hurtwood. The Wellerness is focused upon improving people's lives through nature and improving nature through people. In the Spring they hosted a weekend camp using Bentley Copse as a base. They undertook a walk in Winterfold to identify habitats and wildlife. They found a wood ants nest that was sofa sized! In addition, they led a foraging walk, mindfulness session and a woodland yoga nidra. Evenings around the campfire included discussing environmental issues, drumming and storytelling.

In September, a day session was held at Holmbury St Mary Church Room with discussions on ecology, the connection to nature, managing a habitat (especially in regards to deer) and a walk through the woods. Participants were encouraged to look, listen and smell as they trekked through the Hurtwood trees.

Plans for 2024 are unfolding where people will be encouraged to explore different mindsets about nature and the environment. The local representative of The Wellerness is Mick Channon in Holmbury St Mary.

<https://thewellerness.org.uk/> also on Facebook at www.facebook.com/thewellerness.cic/

Peter Chamberlain ARPS CPAGB

Peter, a Surrey resident since the age of eight, has had almost a lifelong interest in photography.

It began with the gift from an aunt of a Brownie 127 (fondly remembered, perhaps, by those of a certain age!) and progressed, with varying levels of enthusiasm, from there.

Following many years of using film, much of it processed in his own darkroom, Peter now works exclusively with digital equipment.

He uses a variety of digital cameras – their exact number fortunately not being apparent to his wife – and processes the image files using Photoshop and selected 'plug in' software. The resultant prints are produced by Peter himself in what he ambitiously refers to as his 'digital darkroom'.

Peter's diverse portfolio contains mixed subject matter ranging from portraits through events and abstracts to landscapes. The latter form a substantial part of the collection – augmented from time to time by photographic trips to the Lake District, Scotland, other UK destinations and, of course, overseas. The principal objective in all of this – admittedly not always achieved – is to produce something which, using strong senses of composition and design (ideally in the right conditions), is more than pure record.

Peter holds an Associateship of the Royal Photographic Society (ARPS), awarded in recognition of work of a high standard demonstrating 'strong technical ability using techniques and photographic practices appropriate to the subject'. He has also gained, at Credit level, an Award for Photographic Merit from the Photographic Alliance of Great Britain (CPAGB).

Peter has a longstanding association with Pitch Hill and the Hurtwood. His maternal grandparents were born and brought up in Cranleigh, as were his mother and her seven siblings – and an aunt and a great aunt were, for many years, both resident on the slopes of Pitch Hill. He therefore spent much time in the area as a child and, with retirement and a relatively recent move to Walliswood, he is now able to devote significant time to photography in the delightful woodlands that cover much of Pitch Hill, Winterfold and the Hurtwood.

Woodlands are a challenging subject for the photographer. Early morning starts, mist – and even rain – can help towards pleasing results; but good composition is key to making an image which is more than just a tangle of trees and vegetation!

Hopefully the pictures in the Gallery demonstrate at least some success in this respect. All being well, this creative process will continue.....

Peter's fabulous pictures can be seen at <http://foth.co.uk/images-from-the-hurtwood/>



'Goat-sucker' or 'corpse bird' – the much maligned nightjar

The European nightjar 'Caprimulgus europaeus' is an elusive species. Often the male bird's unique churring call is the only sign that these migrants have arrived in the Hurtwood for the summer, unless you are incredibly lucky and manage to spot one silhouetted against the moonlight.

Secretive birds then, and also ones that have been enmeshed in sinister myths and legends for thousands of years.

In many European languages, the nightjar is known as the 'goatsucker,' with the genus name caprimulgus deriving from the Latin for 'milker of goats'. The birds were often found near livestock, and they were thought to drink directly from a nanny goat's udders. People also believed that any goats that fell victim to a goatsucker would stop producing milk and might also go blind.

Others believed the nightjars' churring was the sound of witches hiding in bushes and the bird was also known as the 'lich fowle' or 'corpse fowl' bringing bad luck.

In Germanic folklore Odin is said to be accompanied by a 'night-raven' during the Wild Hunt - a ghostly procession of fallen warriors that would travel the night sky in winter and abduct anyone who saw them, carrying them off to the underworld. The Norwegian word for nightjar is 'nattravn', or 'night-raven'. English folklore added that nightjars were the souls of unbaptised children, doomed to wander the wild night sky.

Aristotle referred to the nightjar and its alleged harmful impact on goats in the 4th century BC, and Pliny the Elder, a Roman naturalist and father of the modern encyclopedia, repeated it a handful of centuries later in his *Naturalis Historiae*.

Superstitions can also be traced to the Bible which lists the nightjar as one of the birds that should not be eaten at whatever cost.

It wasn't until the early 19th-century, however, that the naturalist and conservationist, Charles Waterton, attempted to put the record straight. He wrote: "The harmless, unoffending Goatsucker, from the time of Aristotle down to the present day, has been in disgrace with man. Father has handed down to son, and author to author, that this nocturnal thief subsists by milking the flocks. Poor injured little bird of night, how sadly hast thou suffered, and how foul a stain has inattention to facts put upon thy character! Thou hast never robbed man of any part of his property nor deprived the kid a drop of milk."

In reality, as insectivores, they would have been searching for the insects and bugs living around domestic animals, their large mouths perfectly designed for capturing large insects like moths and beetles in flight on dark nights, rather than for clamping on goat nipples.



Traditionally a heathland species, the European nightjar also nests in pine plantation with sparse tree cover, so the heather and Scots pine of the Hurtwood is theoretically an ideal habitat. Unfortunately as a ground-nester, the heavy traffic of people, dogs and bikes across the whole area is a big issue for them.

Between 1972 and 1992, the nightjar's range in the UK declined by around 50% primarily due to habitat loss and it is now a protected species.

The Merlin app is brilliant!

Even if you are not a bird expert, a birder or even a twitcher, you might still be interested in an app called Merlin from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology in the US, writes Zoe Horton. It will identify birds from their sounds and gives a picture.



Now is not the busiest time for birds, but back in June when I first discovered this app, it could identify 10 different species in as many minutes walking on the Hurtwood, some common and some not so common. However, I have yet to hear a Dartford warbler or nightjar. I highly recommend downloading the app which is free. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology also has a very comprehensive website.

These are some of the less common birds I have heard: blackcap, goldcrest, nuthatch, great spotted woodpecker, chiffchaff, song thrush, firecrest, treecreeper, coal tit, goldfinch, marsh tit, kestrel, redstart, buzzard, tawny owl and raven.



Peaslake Fair

Friends of the Hurtwood had a stall at the very successful Peaslake Fair on August 28. It was a fun day engaging with many local residents and visitors about the opportunities for outdoor recreation on the Hurtwood. People made donations, plus folk bought Foth badges, fridge magnets and photos of the Hurtwood by Peter Chamberlain. Between the income for arranging and managing the car parking process, (£535) donations from the Fair and donations from the stall, the Friends raised over £1,200.

The Friends' contribution to the organisation of the Fair is managing the car parking in two places: Walking Bottom car park and Peaslake Farm Fields along Ewhurst Road. A total of 22 volunteers are needed for an hour's shift on each car park and we were grateful for the response from several Friends and bikers to help out.

This year B4SH, Broadband for the Surrey Hills who are installing high speed broadband around the village, very kindly, and at the last minute on the morning of the Fair, set up a WiFi router in the field to enable a card reader. In previous years those arriving without cash escaped payment but not this year!

Parking was charged at £3 per vehicle with £2 coming directly to Foth. Just over £1,000 was collected at the two car parks. A big thanks to all those who helped and came along to support the Fair.

Thanks to the members of the management committee and directors that put in effort on behalf of the charity – Zoe Horton, Assheton Don, Tom Davies, Nancy Loates-Taylor and Antony Collins.



Badges and fridge magnets



- 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

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

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

www.foth.co.uk

Contacts:

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

www.facebook.com/hurtwood.ranger