

Chairman's Letter

Dear Friends

Firstly I'd like to give you my news. I intend to stand down as Chairman following this year's Annual Meeting of the Friends. I haven't taken this decision lightly, but I feel that increasingly I am unable to conduct the role to my own satisfaction, primarily due to the amount of time I have to dedicate to my main business activities.

I had originally intended to serve for at least five years, so I feel disappointed not to have been able to do so. I am pleased to let you know that Assheton has agreed to step into the role on a temporary basis for 12 months, to allow the board time to find a permanent replacement. I am happy to remain as a director for at least 12 months to provide continuity.

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.

I would draw your attention to the date of the Annual Meeting, it will be on Tuesday April 9 at 7.30pm at the Duke of Kent School.

Antony Collins, Foth Chairman

Use this new QR Code to identify the Hurtwood Car Parks

If you arrive at Peaslake or Holmbury St Mary and find your favourite car park is full, use this new QR code to find the alternative car parks around the Hurtwood.

There are many designated car parks around the common and it is important visitors use them and not the lanes in and around the villages.



The Pitch Hill bench is back

Martin Nicholson has carried out vital repairs to the old metal bench at the top of Pitch Hill and it is now back at the viewpoint. Whose paws are those printed in that nice wet concrete?



The new sign boards at Reynards Hill



Ranger's Report

Yet another rainy day and I've not seen the figures yet but I'm sure we must be in for a record regarding rainfall of some sort! Whilst it doesn't dampen the enthusiasm of many of our visitors, it does have an impact on some of the tasks I have planned for the winter.

Disabled Access: By now I was hoping to be able to bring you news of the refurbished Disabled Access track on Holmbury Hill. So far we have managed to clear around the paths and the memorial trees to the late Derek Barnett, who was the forester for Shere Manor Estate for many years.



We've cleared the view in front of the Converse seat made by the artist Matthew Burt, so looking south towards the Downs isn't quite such an eye strain and also cleared around the main track. Following this, the plan was then to re-surface the entire track with the aid of a grant from the Surrey Hills National Landscape.

This was all booked in for early February but the rain has simply made it impossible. We are going to use Fittleworth path gravel which is almost identical to the stone found on The Hurtwood. This gravel should be far more suitable for wheelchair access, but it can only be dug from the quarry in West Sussex after a period of dry weather (which we clearly haven't had) but also once its laid it will need at least a few days of no rain to allow it to settle in properly. Previous experience in the car parks has shown that laying wet Fittleworth stone just doesn't work, soon turning to slush.

Car Park 1: talking of slush, if you've tried to get into No 1 car park recently, you'll have noticed that the entrance has suddenly deteriorated, making it a bit sloshy and not very easy to get in. Again, this should have been fixed by now, but we can't get onto it unless we have a block of dry weather. The entrance is a continuing problem, but if we go over it with the bulldozer every nine months or so it seems to hold ok, unfortunately this winter it's not lasted so well.

We have also carried out a major cut back of the gorse on the west side of Car Park 1 too, so now the view from the car park has been regained.



The work also had the added benefit of reducing a significant fire risk from having the gorse on the edge of the car park where people often have BBQs.

If you've been up to Car Park 4 at Reynards Hill you may have seen the new interpretation board for the WWII project.

Vanishing car park signs: In the week between Christmas and the new year we installed 16 new car park entrance signs. Our old signs were starting to rot and blend into their environment a little too well. On the one hand this may be considered a good thing, but part of the reason we have the signs is to let our visitors know where they are visiting. Still, too often I hear visitors saying they



thought this was a council managed carpark or isn't it the National Trust? So following inspiration from some of the other countryside sites in the area, we decided a car park sign with bolder colours and made of better lasting aluminium would help establish our role as managers of the area. As I hope you'd agree, the new signs look rather smart and hopefully not too bright and offensive. Unfortunately for some reason, known only to them, someone dug seven of the signs out of the ground and stole them in the following two weeks. Whether it was the lovely oak posts they wanted, or the scrap value of the aluminium, I've no idea. These signs aren't cheap at over £600 each, so now I've just had some much cheaper signs made which I'll fix to softwood posts. Whilst not looking as good, they will hopefully suffice, and remain in place.

Pitch Hill Triangle: On Pitch Hill we've cleared the triangle of young tree growth, mostly Scots pine and birch, which is something we do every few years. Whilst it obviously has some wildlife benefit, it is also appreciated by visitors. I get a lot of requests from people who appreciate the open area so if we can keep on top of it regularly it's not too onerous a task. We've also been having some major cutting done to increase the width of the main fire breaks on Pitch Hill, and this will be ongoing into next year.



I'm afraid I can't let a newsletter go by without saying that we are still experiencing fly tip problems in the car parks. As ever, please do let me know if you see anything and I'll do my best to get it cleared as soon as possible.

Mark Beaumont



The unfolding tragedy of ash die back

Stately 60ft tall ash trees have had to be felled using special equipment at Holmbury St Mary because they are suffering from ash dieback.

Ash dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*) is a fungus which originated in Asia and was first recorded in the UK in 2012. It is now affecting a huge number of trees in the UK – estimates vary but around 85% of ash need to be felled.

Leaves start by developing dark patches and the shoots wither. Dark brown lesions appear where branches meet the trunk and the tree slowly dies. Ash trees can be very dangerous to cut down - they have the potential to explode when cut and fatalities have resulted. Shere Manor Estate hired mobile elevating work platforms to enable specialist tree surgeons to carry out the operation in safety.



Surrey County Council – New code of conduct for dog walking

In January 2024 Surrey County Council published a new code of conduct for dog walking. It starts with the following statement:

Welcome to Surrey's countryside: a beautiful, tranquil, and environmentally sensitive place enjoyed by local wildlife and visitors alike. We want all dog walkers to have a happy, healthy, hassle-free visit and so ask that you follow our code of conduct.



At the end of January an unfortunate incident happened in the Hurtwood on Holmbury Hill. A loose dog ran up and knocked an 86 year old woman to the ground. She was doing a regular dog walk with her pet, who was under control. Happily the senior citizen wasn't injured, just shaken up and continues to walk on the hill but her family and neighbours were concerned. We know many people use the Hurtwood for exercising their dog(s). Those of us that do, need to be mindful of other users and keep their pet under control.

The first point in the code is: **Keep dogs under control and within sight**



The code then goes onto several important points, which you can view at:

www.surreycc.gov.uk/culture-and-leisure/countryside/what-can-you-do/walking/dog-walking

As Spring arrives it is also important to keep your dog under control to not disturb the ground nesting birds, especially in heathland areas around the Hurtwood.

FRIENDS OF THE HURTWOOD Annual Meeting

APRIL 9 at 7.30pm

at the Duke of Kent School

**Guest speaker: Pauline Lane,
Guildford Beekeepers Association**



Asian Hornet



European Hornet



Wasp



Honey Bee

Our Guest Speaker at the Foth Annual Meeting on April 9 will be Pauline Lane from Guildford Beekeepers Association who will give a talk on the threats facing our native pollinators and the challenges they pose for bees and beekeepers.

Pauline says: "Beekeeping is a fascinating and absorbing activity which requires commitment and energy. It is not just about honey production – beekeepers have a responsibility to the bees as living creatures. There are many challenges that our forebears did not have, not least the catastrophic decrease in wildflowers and hedgerows that provide so much forage. The arrival of the varroa mite in the 1990s caused devastation among our native bees and a huge decline in beekeeping in UK. Now there is the threat of the Asian Hornet which may prove to be the biggest challenge yet."

March is the month when young Asian Hornet queens emerge from hibernation so it is important that everyone knows how to identify them so the relevant authorities can be alerted and nests destroyed.

Contact: alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk or www.nonnativespecies.org/alerts/asianhornet



Established in 1920, Guildford Beekeepers Association aims to promote responsible beekeeping which includes caring for bees but also supporting other pollinators such as bumblebees, butterflies, hoverflies, and moths. Is there sufficient forage for all of them, how can we keep healthy bees and therefore reduce disease?

GBKA also spreads the word to non-beekeepers to encourage them to grow pollen and nectar-producing plants in their gardens to provide food for all insects as well as honeybees.

If you want information on any aspect of beekeeping or talks for schools or organisations go to the website: www.guildfordbeekeepers.co.org

Community Week at the Duke of Kent School

The Friends of the Hurtwood is going to be involved with the Duke of Kent School during their Community Week. The School has arranged for different volunteer activities for the students. On two afternoons in the first week of June the Hurtwood Ranger is going to meet with groups of up to 12 children at a Hurtwood site to give a talk about the Hurtwood and then send them out to do litter picking.

Social media update

As always thanks to everyone who follows and interacts with us on social media. We now often get mentioned and tagged in other people's pictures and videos. Its great to get interactions from all user groups and see how many people are out there enjoying the Hurtwood.

We get good and bad messages from people advising us of lost dogs or new flytips to sharing photos and videos from their time in the hills. We like to help where we can but we don't own the land and as a small charity are limited in both our responsibilities and resources.

Remember, your donations go a long way to helping us maintain this beautiful area. #FotH

FotH and the Royal Oak – Happy News



The Royal Oak in Holmbury St Mary has joined the Friends of the Hurtwood as a Business Friend providing regular monthly donations.

We are grateful for their support and encourage everyone who visits the Holmbury area to support the local pub: www.theroyaloak-holmbury.co.uk

You can also make an in-person donation to the Friends of the Hurtwood with the electronic pay point on the bar at the pub, shown here.



- 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!



Badges and fridge magnets



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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