

Chairman's Letter

Dear Friends

In addition to our regular work, this year in February we organised a talk on trees and forestry in Holmbury Village Hall given by Alex MacKinnon, one of the Friends' trustee directors and a professional forester. This is the first talk we have organised for a while. It included refreshments and a raffle with prizes ranging from a young oak tree, ready for planting, to dinner for two, generously donated by the Hurtwood Inn. We were delighted to welcome an audience of nearly a hundred and I very much hope all enjoyed the evening.

A lot of work goes into organising events and thanks are due to the many who helped. A special mention is due to Alex, for giving the talk, and to Nancy Loates-Taylor, our communications director, who led the preparation and ensured that the evening ran smoothly. We hope that more events will follow.

I wrote in the autumn newsletter that the number of trustee directors had reduced during 2024, and with normal turnover we can expect more changes in 2025. We are therefore looking for new volunteers to become trustee directors. The commitment is not overwhelming and if anyone reading this is interested please get in touch with me at chairman@foth.co.uk.

As ever, and on behalf of all our users, we are immensely appreciative of all the support we receive locally and from further afield, including that from our members, the landowners and businesses; I also want to thank our directors and the many volunteers who help to keep the charity running, and in particular special thanks to our Ranger, Mark Beaumont.

Assheton Don, Chairman
chairman@foth.co.uk

Duke of Kent School Initiative

Last June the Duke of Kent asked whether the Friends of the Hurtwood could become involved in their Community Week where students do an activity that helps the local community. It was arranged that a group of students aged 11 to 15 would meet in one of the popular Hurtwood car parks and do a litter pick. The Ranger, Mark Beaumont, provided black bin bags, disposable gloves and some litter pickers. In the end it was a popular activity and two groups of students cleared Pitch Hill and Holmbury Hill car parks on separate days.

This year Community Week will run from June 16-19. The school will choose two of the days to bring the groups of volunteering students to the car parks in the afternoon. A beneficial activity to help the local environment.



Shere Eco-church Litter Pick on April 13

It would be fantastic if Foth members were able to support this initiative organised by the Climate Cafe team in the parish of Shere Eco-Church. The team hold events once a month and this is their second big litter pick. They are borrowing a set of litter pickers/hi-viz jackets from Guildford Borough Council and they will be collecting our pile of bags on Monday April 14.

As you'll see from the poster on page 6 they are starting at the Old School Room in Peaslake and returning there for tea and cake. They will be encouraging litter picking on the Hurtwood, in all the local car parks and road verges. People can choose whether to start close to their home (if in another village) and just join for tea at the end. The more the merrier to help!

Ranger's Report



After what's felt like a rather long grey winter, the weather today is finally starting to feel a little more spring like. With this rare burst of sunshine, brings many more welcome visitors to the Hurtwood wishing to enjoy the peace and quiet.

Unfortunately, not everyone is so welcome. Off-road motorbikes have been visiting the area, but with a slight difference. Though they may be quiet as they have electric motors, their speed and power classes them as motorised vehicles in the eyes of the law. Consequently, they are not allowed on the Hurtwood, for obvious reasons. Powerful motorbikes travelling at speed are not a good mix for our visitors.

If you do see any, please do report them to the police, especially if you can get the number plates of the vehicles they are using to bring the motorbikes here. The Hurtwood is a public space and the Police will take measures to ensure everyone is kept as safe as possible, please use the 101 number to report "antisocial activity in a public space".

The last six months has also been marred by continual fly tipping, almost weekly! Just before Christmas we had 76 used tyres dumped on the side of the road at Farley Heath between our two car parks. The quantities of fly tip we've been getting has been so large that its now cheaper and quicker to get in the grab lorry directly to remove it rather than have me collecting and taking it to our rubbish compound. Some car parks are more prone to getting fly tip dumped in them, and recently car park No 1 is falling victim rather regularly and as I write this I've just been told that another new pile of builders' rubbish has been dumped in there which includes a large quantity of asbestos.



We recently also had a burnt out van, presumably stolen and then set alight in there too. Fortunately, with a little persuasion, we are able to get abandoned or burnt out vehicles removed by the local authority, though sadly the same can't be said for any fly tipping.

We have been continuing with cutting back the vegetation from the main rides, mostly on Pitch Hill from Walking Bottom car park and the eastern rides. There's still plenty more to do but it's something we try to do on a five-yearly basis. We've also spent some time over in Bookhurst Wood, mostly working on dead, diseased or dangerous trees that are next or near to any of the statutory rights of way and main paths in the wood. There was also some repair work needed to be done to vandalised entrance barriers, which have now been repaired.

We've replaced the seat at Jellies Hollow which had sadly been vandalised and re-dug out all the gullies from Peaslake Church Cemetery.



On Holmbury Hill fort, I've now finished cutting back all the invasive Rhododendron, and we'll be giving it a major grass cut this summer, with the aim of cutting it on a two yearly cycle.



So many people comment on how nice it is to have the hill fort open and accessible, and with the vegetation cut, its so much clearer and easier to see the outlines of the Hill fort.

There have been a few named storms since our last news-letter, and this has resulted in a number of trees down across paths, and in some cases making them



impassable. I generally get these cleared as soon as I'm notified, but I do rely on our visitors to spot them, so please do get in touch if you see anything that needs attention.



The final touches have now been added to the disabled access track on Holmbury Hill, with the inclusion of a new level parking space for disabled vehicle to park and access the track more easily. The work for this has all been funded by a grant from The Surrey Hills National Landscape. The disabled access track gives an opportunity for wheelchair users to get out of the car park and onto the southern viewpoint by the circular chestnut benches, 'Converse' by Matthew Burt. *Mark Beaumont, Ranger*

Where The Wild Things Are: Discover the Hurtwood Nightjars



I'm Ben West and I lead Nightjar walks on the Surrey Heathlands. One of my favourite places to watch Nightjars and other heathland wildlife is The Hurtwood. If you would like to join me this year I'll be out on the heath on the following dates;

Ben's Nightjar Walks

May 31, June 14, June 28, July 12 and July 26.

You can book your place through my website www.wherethewildthingsare.co.uk

Here's what to expect on one of my Nightjar walks:

Shafts of light from the setting sun splinter as they strike stands of Scots pine. The last

scratches of Dartford warbler song filter through the gorse. Soft blackbird chuckles become frenzied alarms as the birds go noisily to roost. The sounds of the dying day are displaced by those of the dusk. The goblin-esque grunts and sharp squeaks of 'roding' Woodcock. Male and female tawny owls' call and response. The bark of a roe deer as it catches my scent. We are heading into the 'nightjar zone'...

Nightjars are crepuscular birds, emerging at dusk from their daytime slumber to hunt for moths and other insects in the twilight. The first indication of the Nightjar's presence is a brief stuttering splutter of 'song', closer to the sound of a Salmon stripping line off a fly reel or a giant stridulating cricket, than one produced by a bird. As the night draws in the duration of these outbursts increases until the air is filled with weird mechani-



cal electricity. In The Hurtwood, males will sing on the ground or from a low post but more typically use a lofty perch in an Oak or a Scots Pine.

To learn more about Nightjars and other wildlife follow me on Instagram **wearewherethewildthingsare** go to website **www.wherethewildthingsare.co.uk** or email **ben@wherethewildthingsare.co.uk**
Ben West

What is 'Friends of the Hurtwood' and what does it do?

This is a 'frequently asked question' a classic FAQ! Here are some answers.....

1. The Foth is a registered charity founded 100 years ago to manage and oversee the public access to the privately owned land of the Hurtwood. The Foth acts as the single point of contact for the general public. It also maintains paths and tracks, car parks and signage, cuts back shrubs and brushwood that grow to obscure view-points, liaises with landowners on forestry activity, guards against fire risk, protects specific wildlife habitat - for example the herpetological areas (for lizards and other reptiles) - and sorts out fly-tipping which is an all too frequent affliction. It hosts events around the neighbourhood from time to time, ranging from cleaning days, speaker evenings, tree planting and children's activities with local schools.

2. How is the Friends of the Hurtwood managed?

The Foth employs a full time ranger and owns a range of equipment that the ranger can use. Occasionally it hires contractors for larger projects as needed. Activity is overseen by a board of directors that reports annually to the charity's members, its regular donors. A sub-group of the board is delegated to handle day to day matters and support the ranger when needed. If you are interested in getting involved please email **communicatuions@foth.co.uk**

3. How is the Friends of the Hurtwood funded?

It is funded through regular donations from the general public and local businesses, from the landowners, occasional grants from local authorities and money raised at organised events. Altogether it has a budget of around £120,000 per year and donations of something under £100,000. The resulting deficit in recent years has been covered by drawing on legacy reserves.

4. How is access allocated between cyclists, horse riders and pedestrians?

There is no formal allocation. The Hurtwood is unusual in that all the land is open to the public for enjoyment of air and exercise. Dogs and horses are permitted, as are cyclists. All users should act considerately towards other users and be aware other types of user may be encountered at any time in any part of the Hurtwood.

5. Who owns the land managed by the Friends of the Hurtwood?

Originally, the Hurtwood was largely owned by the Shere Manor and Albury Estates and was dedicated by them to public use in 1926. Over the 100 years since, ownership has changed a little and we now have a number of private landowners who continue to support the aims of the Friends of the Hurtwood and help financially to support the charity through their donations. Notwithstanding the changes over the years, so far none of the area has been withdrawn from public access.

6. What points of historic interest fall within the Hurtwood?

There are three ancient monuments:

1: The remains of an iron age hill fort on Holmbury Hill. The exact date of construction is uncertain, but it is possibly linked to two other sites at Anstiebury and Hascombe, all sandstone promontories overlooking the Weald and all three linked to the Roman invasion of 54 BC. This site is marked with an information board.

2: A second, smaller iron age hill fort can be found at Felday. This fort is on a north east facing spur but like the others looks to both the North and South Downs beyond the Weald. The fort enclosure also contains the remains of a **WWI prisoner of war camp.**

3: The site of a Romano-Celtic temple at Farley Heath. This may have marked the boundary between the land of the Regnenses of Sussex and East Surrey, and the Atrebatas of Hampshire.

The outer and inner walls of the temple are today marked out clearly in stone.

There is believed to have been a Roman road branching off from Stane Street to go past the villa at Rapsley in Ewhurst, over Winterfold and on to the temple at Farley Green, so today's walkers are following in very ancient footsteps.

Parish of Shere Eco Church
Tillingbourne.Earth

CLIMATEcafé[®]

MEET, TALK, LISTEN, DISCUSS - EVERYONE IS WELCOME

Sunday 13 April

Community Litter Pick



2.30 pm Meet at Old School Room, Peaslake GU5 9RR,
or choose a pesky patch close to home to tidy

4.30 pm Tea and cake at the Old School Room

Everyone is welcome to take part - please bring
gloves and a litter picker if you have one (we will have
spare) and walking shoes!

For more info contact:
07966 718478
ecopeaslake@gmail.com

The importance of trees

Trees and their management proved a popular subject for the launch in February of the new programme of talks organised by Friends of the Hurtwood. And it was clear that local people care deeply about the Hurtwood's forest cover.

The speaker was Alex MacKinnon, a director of FoTH and professional forester who specialises in creating woodland to use for carbon capture and credits. He explained that although Surrey had the highest level of tree cover in England, overall the UK had a lower percentage than in Europe and was in danger of being in a state of deforestation.

Alex clarified the roles of the Friends and the owners: The Friends are managers of the public access to the Hurtwood, maintaining paths and car parks and removing fly-tip. The owners manage the commercial forestry – planting, thinning and harvesting the timber crop. During the pandemic, he said, public use of the Hurtwood had increased tenfold.

And why did a professional forester want to join the Friends? "I wanted to give something back to the area and help conserve the place I have appreciated as I grew up here," he said.

Alex explained that most commercial forestry involved conifers such as Sitka spruce, which has a 35-year seedling-to-harvest life span, while broadleaf forest tended to be used more for sport and recreation as oak trees take 100 years to mature. The Hurtwood contains a mix of Scots and Corsican pine, larch and Douglas fir, none dating earlier than the 1940s.

He talked about the potential serious impact of climate change on the Hurtwood with more and more species failing to survive cycles of heavy rain and long periods of high temperatures and drought. Stressed trees would be susceptible to pests and diseases.

He warned about increased danger from forest fires and said he wanted everyone to have a greater appreciation of trees and the need to plant more.

Question time revealed how sensitive local people are to the harvesting process which leaves the land looking a mess, but it does not take long before self-seeding replenishes the woodland. And where self-seeding is not an option, young trees are planted. In 2022 the Bray Estate's success with self-seeded forestry helped it win the Silviculture award from the Royal Forestry Society, which is a national award for the management of woodland.



The iconic Scots pine



The Sitka spruce





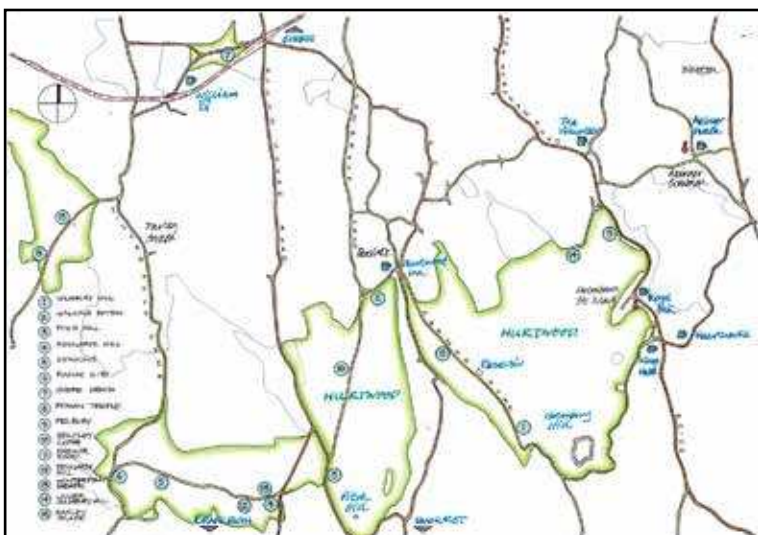
Peter Chamberlain's beautiful photos

The pictures in the FoTH Gallery demonstrate his success in capturing the changing moods and colours of the woods. Peter's fabulous pictures can be seen at:

<http://foth.co.uk/images-from-the-hurtwood/>

Here are the Hurtwood Car Parks

This very useful map shows exactly where all the car parks are. You can download it by going to the website <https://foth.co.uk/hurtwood-location/> 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.



- 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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