NEW FOREST ASSOCIATION

Working to Protect the New Forest

Newsletter

Number 12

Summer 2012
**CONTENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Important Information for Members</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Editor’s Page</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Independent Panel on Forestry Visit</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your Ten for Starters</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 NPS Annual Conference</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Quartet of Walks</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballard Water Meadow, New Milton</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Little Acorns</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thanks to our Members</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Forest Ponies</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slug Watch</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your Letters</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peterson’s Folly</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew Thomas Turton Peterson</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Review</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteers Wanted</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your Ten for Starters—the answers</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting in Touch</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note**

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2012 SHOW PROGRAMME

The Association will have a stand at the following shows:

New Forest    24th—26th July

Nomansland    27th August

Romsey       8th September

If you are visiting any of them do drop in to see us. NFA merchandise and publications will be available. We look forward to welcoming you to the stand.

WALKS AND ACTIVITIES

As we go to press before arrangements for this year’s programme of walks and activities have been completed, please use our website to keep up to date.

www.newforestassociation.org.uk

Details will also be circulated to members with an email address.

Email Addresses

We are very grateful to the many members who have supplied us with an email address. You have given us a much improved way of contacting you speedily when necessary and of sending you reminders about forthcoming events. If you are happy to be contacted in this way but have not yet given us your address, please let Michael Chilcott have it as soon as possible. His email address is secretary@newforestassociation.org. Receipt of your details in response to this note will be taken as your consent for them to be included in the database. This will not be disclosed to other organisations.
The Editor's Page

The Association has a proud tradition behind it but has usually been at its strongest when addressing a crisis. That, after all, was how it came into being 145 years ago and if it loses the ability to rise to the occasion when necessary it will have lost its raison d’etre. However, times change. The NFA is now accepted as the official New Forest National Park Society, one of the smaller societies when compared with those covering Exmoor, the Lake District or the Yorkshire Dales. Lack of size can be a problem but smallness does not of itself make a society ineffective. New emphases emerge as circumstances change. For the Association, that means a shift from reactive thinking to proactivity.

I aim to reflect this in future editions of the Newsletter. We have the care of an international ecological treasure that is increasingly under pressure as the demands of society impact upon it. Part of the needed response lies in the whole area of education. Those piling on the pressures need to be aware of what they are jeopardising. They need to become involved in finding ways of enjoying the Forest while also safeguarding it. This applies as much to residents as to visitors. All of us should be doing more to ensure that our treasure is not debased.

In future editions, we shall continue to highlight aspects of local history but also to include much more that will assist a deeper understanding of the ecology of the Forest and what we can do to enhance it. We would like to issue three editions each year with Spring and Autumn issues geared primarily, but not exclusively, for members, and a Summer issue intended to attract new members through wide distribution at the local shows. Your views on both the format and the number of issues will be welcomed. Newsletters will be numbered, starting with the first of those carried on the website.

This Newsletter should have been distributed with the Annual Reports but, because of a serious printing error, we could only publish it on our website. This text is an updated and expanded version. We hope this will not in anyway diminish your enjoyment of it.

Graham
New Forest Association chairman Peter Roberts was one of a group of six that hosted the visit by the Independent Panel on Forestry (IPF) at the end of February 2012. The IPF team comprised Alan Knight, Mike Clarke and Tom Franklin who were accompanied by three of the secretariat including Deputy Surveyor Mike Seddon. The group first travelled to Hampton Ridge where the aptly named Gaze Hill allowed all to appreciate that the New Forest is not just about timber production. Dominic May, the Official Verderer, led the discussion on commoning in which there was plenty of opportunity for CDA representative Richard Deakin to stress its importance to the landscape that was before us. Consultative Panel chairman Tim Greenwood organised the day in collaboration with Alison Barnes of the National Park Authority and Kevin Penfold, acting Deputy Surveyor. This team was joined at various times by Phil Marshall of the National Trust, Alastair Duncan of the Access Forum, and John Thackray from the New Forest Ramblers, with various FC staff appearing as required.

Tony Giddings, the saw miller, was invited to contribute on the importance of the pine plantations to his business, explaining that there was only a small market for hardwoods. Debate ensued about the value of pasture woodlands to commoning, and the amenity value that they offered to the public as well as the benefits to wildlife. There was a forthright exchange of thoughts throughout the day with some probing questions from the visitors. The first part of the discussion moved on beyond the driftway at the pound to the submarine pens. This World War II target provided an excellent viewpoint for conversation about the various types of habitat that the New Forest affords.
A hasty lunch was taken in the Verderers Court where some of the host team gave brief views of different aspects of the Forest. Peter Roberts spoke about the origins of the commoning system and the part played by the founders of the NFA in the 19th century which ensured that the Forest survived at all. The question of alternative recreation sites around the edges, and beyond the National Park, was raised by Alastair Duncan. Peter Roberts reminded the meeting that opportunities for Nature Improvement Areas under the Lawton Report were part of the Terms of Reference for the IPF.

The afternoon started with a visit to Setley Pond where conservation volunteers were at work under the watchful eye of Ranger Vicky Myers. Recreation issues and community involvement were the main topics raised here. The trip ended at Hollands Wood where a representative of Forest Holidays explained their business. Strong opinions were voiced about the difficulties of managing a site in an ancient woodland on an SSSI that is in very poor condition, and is grazed. One suggestion from a member with recreational interests was that the area should have its status as an SSSI removed! The hosts were anxious to make the point that camping was welcome but not when the impact of visitors damages the very things people come to see or interferes with commoning pasture lands.

There was much talk through the day about the value of the various New Forest Forums, such as the Consultative Panel, providing opportunity for debate and information sharing. Whilst the benefits of the present system with its checks and balances were stressed, its weakness was also shown. No representative from Natural England was present. This left a gap in the discussions and also mirrored their current lack of involvement in Forest issues. Mike Clarke asked the crucial question ‘what is our vision of the New Forest in 50 or a 100 years?’

We had the impression that IPF members found the day useful and fully entered into the debates and discussions. The general feeling of the host group was that the day had worked well, looking at a variety of habitats and stressing the importance of commoning. The crucial message was that the New Forest is not a major plantation site waiting for more saplings but a working area based on commoning that already hosts a
wealth of recreation opportunities and should be apart from mainstream Forestry Commission woodlands.

Peter Roberts

YOUR TEN FOR STARTERS

William Ziegler has kindly provided a quiz to test our knowledge of the New Forest.

1. In what year was the New Forest perambulation gridded?
2. What is the acreage of the Crown lands within the perambulation?
3. Who sentenced Alice Lisle to death?
4. To the nearest 50, how many species of wild flowers are said to grow in the New Forest?
5. Who wrote the *Children of the New Forest*?
6. Where would you find a submarine pen in the New Forest?
7. When was Holmesley Station opened and when did it close?
8. Name one of the artists who worked on the stained glass windows in the church of St. Michael and All Angels, Lyndhurst.
9. Which word, when applied to animals, means active during the day?
10. In what year did the New Forest Buckhounds stop hunting?

The answers are on page 25.
There can be little doubt that four teenage girls stole the show. They had recently moved from middle to upper school and spoke for twenty minutes about their experience of the Exmoor Curriculum. This is an educational co-operative between local schools and the Exmoor Society, the National Park and the County Education Authority. At its heart is the vision of raising up a new generation of Exmoor residents who will feel real ownership of the National Park, seek its well-being, and be equipped with the necessary skills to assist its maintenance and to enable personal survival when venturing onto the Moor. The vision becomes reality through a well planned curriculum that has attained high Ofsted ratings and results in many of those moving from middle to upper school arriving with a GCSE. In addition, some of them are attaining a Junior Ranger status within the National Park. Inspiring!

The Conference, based at Selworthy, near Minehead, heard a number of speakers explain aspects of the maintenance and improvement work being carried out on the moor, including mire restoration, flood management schemes, and work with farmers to reduce the loss of soil following heavy rain. Against the background of diminishing funding, the importance of inter-agency co-operation was stressed. This enables maximum resources to be harnessed and leads to a greater sense of community amongst the Moor’s various interest groups. However, the overall objective must always be to enhance the qualities that make Exmoor special.

Ruth Chambers, assistant Chief Executive and Head of Policy for the Campaign for National Parks provided an extensive and illuminating ‘state of the nation’ address in which she highlighted the many achievements within the national parks, and identified continuing and emerging challenges, including practical and political problems that need to be addressed. A number of field trips provided a taster to show why Exmoor is so special. The Exmoor Society are to be congratulated on an excellent conference.

(photograph: page 27)

Graham Long
A QUARTET OF WALKS

(The first two reports by Georgina Babey were held over from the Autumn 2011 Newsletter.)

August  Touring Heywood Sumner country

Anne Biffin, whose name will be familiar to regular readers of the Newsletter, was the first walk leader in our new programme of members’ events that began last summer, giving us a tour of ‘Heywood Sumner country’. The weather had not looked promising during the day, but a small and enthusiastic band of walkers arrived at Fritham Car Park to be taken on a circular walk of 3 to 4 miles - around Sloden, Amberwood and Crock Hill. Anne’s commentary and photocopied hand-outs helped us to understand the position and workings of the New Forest pottery sites as described by Sumner in his various publications, and filled out her article in the summer edition of the Newsletter. We also saw the seat donated by the New Forest Badger Group in memory of wildlife photographer and film maker, Eric Ashby. The rain held off and, on our return as the sun began to set, the tops of distant trees and the nearby forest understorey turned a deep, glowing red. One of the walkers, who had come along as the guest of an existing NFA member, later became a member herself. All in all, a very promising start to the programme, and our sincere thanks to Anne for sharing her knowledge in such a pleasurable way.

September  Exploring Hale Purlieu

Phil Marshall came from his home in Mottisfont to help lead the second walk around the Turf Hill and Hale Purlieu area. Phil is a NFA Council Member and works for the National Trust which has a special interest in Hale Purlieu because of the concentrations of rare and scarce species to be found there. Sadly, the weather was against us, with heavy and gusting rain most of the day, so only eight brave souls turned out. We were not disappointed for, once again, the rain held off for the entire walk and we were treated to another dramatic sunset at the end.
The chairman, Peter Roberts, told the history of the enormous pylons which stride charmlessly across the area. They date from the 1930s and, had the Forest already gained National Park status at that time, power lines would have avoided the area, as many have since in special conservation areas. Phil then outlined the National Trust’s management policy for the 500 plus acres of dry and wet heath and mires that make up Hale Purlieu. Formerly manorial waste, the Purlieu is still grazed by commoners’ stock and is home to Dartford warblers, stonechats, curlews and nightjars as well as an impressive list of unusual plant and insect species.

Walks, like this, are so valuable in helping us to learn more about the Forest’s cultural, social and natural history.

Georgina Babey

2012 Reports

January  Making space for new life at Pondhead

The January walk/talk proved to be an interesting opportunity to learn about one of the oldest methods of tending a woodland in a sustainable way. Part of the inclosure has been given over to coppicing and we were fortunate to be led by Dave Dibden, who has spent much of his working life in the Forest. His enthusiasm for both his work and the chance to explain all that goes on was a pleasure to see and hear. We learned that often a simple laid hedge will guide deer away from sensitive areas. Where better protection is required the fence posts are merely trees left uncut for the purpose. Methods of cutting the stool to provide wood for spars and hurdles ensures that water drains off the stump so that it does not rot. Growth of around five feet in a year means that new shoots are soon safe from being nipped by deer. New plants are obtained by tying down a stem with a cut on the earth side. Nothing goes to waste: charcoal is made on site in a drum. With the variations in light that coppicing brings over a rotation of seven to ten years, seed which may have laid dormant for many years will bring about new life. Dog violet, bugle and primrose will all encourage insect life. Rare butterflies such as the pearl-bordered fritillary have again appeared in the inclosure, made famous a century ago through the work of the entomologist F. W. Frohawk.

Dave showed us products that he has for sale, ranging from pencils to walking sticks. He is often to be seen at local shows. Further details can be found on his website: www.newforestcoppicecrafts.co.uk

(For further information about coppicing at Pondhead, please see the Autumn 2011 Newsletter pp14-15.)
February  Transformation at Foxbury

The Conservation Walk at the National Trust’s new Foxbury site was a revelation. Those who knew the dense, virtually impenetrable fir plantation were amazed at what has happened. The area has been transformed and taken back, perhaps 200 years, by felling. The undulating nature of the land is now seen with some stunning views from the high points. Pepperbox Hill, the IOW and many points in between were visible on a bright but blustery February morning.

Just over a score of enthusiasts scaled the gates and listened avidly to Phil Marshall’s explanations of what has occurred and what may come. Already ground nesting birds are taking possession, the deer remain in large numbers despite the lack of cover and it is clear that although heather is coming through, birch and bracken will be a force to reckon with. Thanks to a generous local beneficiary an area of English oak has been planted on a former ancient woodland site. A number of ponds remain, one of which may have been a decoy. The site was part of Sloane-Stanley’s Paultons Park, now well known as a fun park but once notorious for an illegal encroachment of common land at Wigley (Half-Moon). The court case was instigated by one of the NFA’s founders, George Briscoe-Eyre. It was fought successfully by the Commons Preservation Society because at the time it was outside of the NFA’s remit.

To remove the fences entirely would allow cattle and ponies to roam freely across the land and would require agreement with the Verderers. It may be better to retain the fences, and invite grazing in when necessary. With the public, perhaps appropriate events could be encouraged or trialled. It is a wonderful opportunity to experiment and educate. With direct access from the A36 it could become a first stop for Forest information, explaining what is special about the area and how it needs to be cared for.

The thanks of all were expressed to Phil for giving up his morning and answering lots of difficult but interesting questions.

Peter Roberts

Are you a potential walk leader? Do you have a favourite walk that gives you enjoyment that you could share with others by leading a group along it? If so, please don’t hold back. Tell Peter Roberts so that it can be built into a programme of future walks.
Conserving New Milton's
Ballard Water Meadow
by Sandy Fagan

The site off Lake Grove Rd and Kennard Rd was an ancient river valley with pockets of sand, clay and gravel. There are 2.9 hectares of neutral marshy grassland with a ditch and stream system which feeds into Ballard Lake. The unimproved wet grassland bordered by deciduous woodland is a wonderful mix for birds as well as flowers and insects and is a rare find these days so close to a town. The woodland contains a standard oak canopy with an underlay of dense holly, hazel and ash. The whole area was grazed until 1990s, but was then neglected and had become overgrown. In 2001 Hants C.C. designated the land a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (S.I.N.C.) to save it from being built on and to allow wildlife to thrive. New Milton Town Council took over responsibility for the land in 2005 and a “friends” group was formed to care for the flora and fauna.

Besides litter picking the whole site, the first major job was to create a pathway through the woodland. The holly had become invasive and nothing would grow on the woodland floor. Each winter an area of holly is cut to allow light through to the ground to create diversity of plants and animals. For one day each winter the New Forest Conservation Volunteers come to help us with this task. Bluebells and wood anemones growing in the wood prove this is ancient woodland as these species don’t travel very far. The unkempt grassland had been taken over by hemlock water droplet, which in its own way attracted numerous insects – but nothing was growing underneath it. The council have been machine cutting the meadow in spring and autumn to reduce the vigour of the hemlock and to allow more diverse species to flourish. Three indicator species found on the original survey were sneezewort, marsh pennywort and the southern marsh orchid. It is hoped that a grazing regime will return to the grassland soon.

Dog walkers had worn pathways across the meadow, which has two distinct patches of orchids – the early spotted to the north and southern marsh nearer
Lake Grove Rd. Monitoring of species is now becoming more important – over time we will be able to prove that progress is being made. A member of the RSPB walks the meadow and woodland at least once a week. Besides the birdlife he has a good knowledge of butterflies, moths and insects. Nest boxes have been erected and are regularly used by small birds. One larger box is being used for the second year by tawny owls. When the frogs are spawning we record new spawn on a daily basis.

Since the inception of the group we have purchased (by aid of a grant) kissing gates which have been erected at entrances to the site. This helps show the boundary of the area and discourages motorbikes which had previously been a nuisance. Two rustic seats have been donated by local residents, making pleasant resting places. Some members of the “friends” devote their time and energy to fundraising at coffee mornings and local Community events, whilst other supporters of the group donate goods to sell. We have to raise money to pay for our own tools and to pay for public liability insurance as we work in a public place. Twice a year we place a photographic display in New Milton library – not only to educate the public about wildlife but to inform them what is available on their own doorstep.

Housing in New Milton is becoming more intensive, more flats and fewer gardens, so it is important that there are green open spaces where people can walk and enjoy the open air. The Arnewood school children, as part of their BTech course, have been making “lectern” style information boards. We are erecting these around the site to inform visitors about the history of the area and the reasons why we are clearing areas of woodland. Our main aims for the future are to encourage more local people to care about the wildlife in their own patch.

CONSERVATION PROJECTS

The Ballard Water Meadow project may be only one of several around the Forest. If you know of any others whose existence should be more widely known, please let me know.

Graham
"FROM LITTLE ACORNS….."
- growing the New Forest Association

Broadly speaking, the larger the membership an organization has the louder its voice. Of course, it has to speak wisely, with real discernment of the situation. Nonetheless, numbers count.

The New Forest Association is the second oldest conservation body. It was founded in 1867 to protect the New Forest. Today’s needs are just as pressing. To meet them effectively we need to increase the Association’s membership. We need to grow to make sure that our voice is heard, but also to enlarge the pool of expertise on which we can draw to tackle the new challenges that those defending the Forest have constantly to face.

Included with this Newsletter is a membership recruitment leaflet. We aim to use it widely at this summer’s shows. If you are receiving it as a member, please don’t bin it. Instead, use it to help us protect the Forest by

- passing it to a friend or neighbour, business colleague, or within your own family, with a word of encouragement to join us;
- helping to change our membership age profile by giving your children and grandchildren the gift of membership as a birthday or Christmas present (possibly even for 2 or 3 years to help them become established).

If you are not a member, why not join us now and begin to make your personal contribution to our work of protecting the New Forest? We hope you will do so. Further copies of the Newsletter can be obtained from our Honorary Secretary, Michael Chilcott, whose address is included in the contact details on page 26.

Graham Long

PS Don’t forget that you can keep up to date with the Association, and make your voice heard within it, through both Facebook and Twitter.
MANY THANKS FOR HELP OFFERED!

Independent Examiner for NFA's Annual Accounts

There has been a very positive response to our request for help in the previous issue. Firstly, Mr Martyn Smith of Boldre, who recently joined the Association, kindly offered his services as an independent examiner in time to complete the examination of the 2011 accounts. We are extremely grateful for the speed of his response and his availability to examine the accounts immediately.

Membership Database

Secondly, there has been a very good response to our request for help in making the database as accurate as we can. Many members have been in touch to supply, confirm or correct their contact details. We are most grateful to all who have responded and hope that those who have not yet made contact will feel encouraged to get in touch without delay. Already we have been able to circulate information / reminders about two events much more quickly than was possible in the past.

Hopefully, notified errors have been removed from the system. However, please review the addressee on the envelope which brought this Newsletter and let us know if, inadvertently, we have created new inaccuracies.

We are grateful to those who have informed us of the death of members, but we still feel there may be those on our mailing list who should be removed either because they are no longer living at the address we have or because they have died. We would rather hear twice than not at all, so please don’t hold back if you feel you have information that can help us to keep up to date.

If you can help, please contact me: Hon. Secretary, Michael Chilcott. email: secretary@newforestassociation.org or phone: 023 8028 2532.

Michael Chilcott
New Forest ponies have been called ‘architects of the Forest’, and certainly the Forest would be a very different place without them. They have to be able to keep condition through the winter without extra feed but they also have to be sellable. In the first decade of the 20th century, in an effort to improve sales, stallions from far away were brought in. They were not adapted to local conditions and their progeny often became very thin, causing awful problems from the 1920s to the 1950s. Fortunately, some commoners recognised the cause of the problem, and petitioned the Verderers not to allow any further outside blood. From 1930 only Forest bred stallions were passed. Today all registered New Forest ponies have some five generations of registered breeding and their tolerance to local bugs and parasites is much improved.

Commoners have to sell most of their foals which are their yearly cash crop. If a mare keeps her foal on the Forest throughout the winter, the foal does very well and learns how to live on the forest by copying her dam but it takes a lot out of the mare, unless she gets supplementary feed. A mare can only do this two or three times in her life, when she is fully grown but not old, and never in successive years. Few commoners have the time or facilities to rear and train their foals, so they have to be sold. As ponies are living longer, fewer replacements are required, sometimes not for more than twenty years. Some years ago it was obvious that the supply of foals greatly exceeded demand, which resulted in very poor prices. One idea was to remove all stallions from the Forest for a year or two but this would have lost any
market there was. If they could not run out, few would be kept, an irrecoverable position. Also a Forestry Commission survey had asked campers why they had chosen to come to the forest. A high proportion said ‘to see the ponies, particularly the foals’. It was decided therefore to cut the number of stallions passed and to reduce the time they were allowed out. By eliminating late foals, which were too young to wean before winter, it would prevent the mares from missing the best of the grazing season for producing milk. The number of stallions passed had been reduced from a high of 120 in the early 1960s to 95 at the start of the scheme. It was agreed to pass only 35. Since the Ministry gave up licensing stallions, the Pony Society have inspected stallions and only those passed by their three judges, and vetted at 2 and 5 years, have their progeny registered. So all those presented to the Verderers have already been approved to breed.

It was realised that such a small number maintained for any length of time would lead to a reduction of the bloodlines. This is dangerous as it increases the risk of recessive and undesirable traits coming out including loss of ability to adapt to changing circumstances and loss of fertility.

The first year of the scheme led to a considerable reduction in the number of foals. In the second year, mares haunting where there was no stallion set off to find one, thereby making the mares more difficult to find and upsetting grazing patterns. In the third year, the younger stallions went looking for the mares and some commoners, not having had a foal to sell for two years, got their mares in and put them to a stud stallion. The following year foal numbers were nearly up to that before the scheme.

The enforced rest had improved the condition of many of the mares and increased their fertility. The standard of foals was better but this was
not reflected in the prices. All stallions passed had to achieve an average of 70% from all 8 inspectors (3 from the Pony Society and 5 from the Verderers) and, of course, the vet. Only 21 were passed in 2010 and 2011 and, as they only ran out for one month, every mare had only one chance to get in foal. Grazing was found for all the stallions to run together when not on the Forest. This, and the work to mitigate bloodlines, is financed from the Higher Level Stewardship.

The bloodline scheme, suggested by Agister R. Maton, consists of taking mares, foaled before the stallion scheme started, of less common bloodlines and running on the Forest, and putting them to local stud stallions. Of the 60 mares volunteered, about half were from reasonably common bloodlines. Of the others, 11 were sent to 5 different stud stallions and are hopefully in foal. They are being kept in keep till they foal, when those with fillies will go back to their owners supported by a premium for each year the filly runs out on the Forest. Any colts considered possible stallions will be offered keep till they come up for passing at 2 years. We await these foals with great interest and hope to repeat the experiment with up to a further 15 mares.

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**SLUG WATCH**

A species of slug new to both the New Forest and the county was found during the autumn visit of the British Naturalists’ Association based at Foxlease, Lyndhurst. Found in the grounds there, and in the approaches to nearby Whitley Wood, *Limacus maculatus* is similar to its relative *Limax flavus* that is commonly associated with human dwellings, except that where *L. flavus* is a mottled greenish -yellow and rather moist in appearance with small tubercles, *L. maculatus* is a mottled dirty green, drier and coarser, and has bluish tentacles.

More recently it has been identified in the Lymington area. Please contact me if you think you have come across this addition to our county’s fauna so that we can find out just how widespread it is.

*Graham Long*
YOUR LETTERS

JUST PICK IT UP…..

Treading in dog poo may be unpleasant but the elements will quite quickly biodegrade the offending item leaving no trace. Alas the same cannot be said of tin or aluminium drink cans that will long remain an eyesore before eventually rusting or getting covered by undergrowth.

I find that one advantage of being a grey-haired wrinkly is that eccentric behaviour such as picking up tin cans will be overlooked by others as being simply the kind of thing that old folks do. When walking my dog I once found as many as 22 in one day, most of which had been tidily put into a plastic shopping bag before being thrown aside.

You may ask why stop at tins? Well that is a reasonable question but I leave plastic and glass bottles and other rubbish to others. So please join me in habitually picking up tins, the bright colours of which do not blend with the beauty and diversity of the Forest. There is no need to search for tins; they can usually be spotted easily.

Brian Walters
Ringwood

Editor’s Comment

We are grateful to Brian for drawing attention to the horrific amount of litter lying around the forest. Besides cans, there are huge numbers of plastic drink bottles along road sides which suggests they have been thrown out of passing vehicles or jettisoned by cyclists and walkers. Pathways are frequently dotted with glass bottles that constitute a permanent danger to people, pets and wildlife, and can easily cause heath and woodland fires. Plastic ingested by ponies and cattle can kill them, and there’s a lot of it about.

Annual litter picks make a valuable contribution to keeping the forest ‘clean’ but Brian suggests a way in which we can all do something. The NFA’s motto is “Working to Protect the New Forest.” The NFA is its members or it is nothing. If we all carried a plastic bag to retrieve litter when we come across it - even if we all have a speciality as Brian does - we could make a real difference to the overall appearance of the forest. Glass will require careful handling and a lined basket would be better than a plastic bag, but its collection would make the forest a safer place as well as better looking.

And maybe, just maybe, someone will ask us what we are doing and provide us with an opportunity to advocate better practice and even to recruit volunteers to the cause. Now that would be a good outcome, wouldn’t it?
Viewed at close quarters from Barrows Lane, Sway, the tower is surprisingly elegant. Constructed almost entirely from unreinforced concrete it soars to a height of 218 feet, the remarkable achievement of an equally remarkable man.

Andrew Thomas Turton Peterson was born in Wakefield, Yorkshire in 1813. He was educated by his maternal grandfather and his great uncle the Rev. John Michele following the death of his father while Andrew was still a boy. Great uncle John was a clever, practical and mechanically minded man, and may have instilled some of his ideas and enthusiasm into the boy’s mind.

He went to sea as a young man but was forced to give up his maritime career after a serious illness, returning home to study for the Bar. In 1843 he qualified as a barrister in Middle Temple, and went to India where he became leader of the Calcutta Bar. During the Indian Mutiny of 1857 he defended Nabobs and Princes for their involvement in the massacres at Lucknow and Delhi, becoming extremely wealthy in the process. Unfortunately the climate and hard work took a toll on his health, and he had to return to England.

In about 1868 he bought Drumduan House and farm with one hundred acres in Flexford and Barrows Lane near Sway. Peterson was interested in proving the worth of building in concrete and set about constructing a number of farm buildings and houses in this material. He built the family home from concrete naming it Arnewood Towers, now renamed Arnewood Court and converted into flats. Later he built a wall around the house, a lodge at the entrance, and a road leading to it. Peterson was very interested in architecture, particularly towers, and incorporated one into his new home. Another small tower was built nearby in the grounds at the rear of the house, now Arnewood Turkeys (International) Ltd. Both towers have an Italianate appearance.
Building the tower started in the late 1870s during the time of the agricultural depression, and continued for approximately five years. Peterson was concerned about the lot of the working man, and his project gave him the opportunity to provide long term employment. His civil engineer, Mr Rollo Massey, stated that Peterson became the largest employer in the area, paying his work force above the current level for labouring and thereby alleviating their poverty.

Peterson’s instruction to his foreman, Fred Hampton, were written in two notebooks entitled “Order Book for Tower,” and he expected his orders to be followed precisely. Advice from Rollo Massey was sought when he became concerned about the wind force. According to Peterson’s calculations, the completed weight of the tower would be between 1,518 and 1,870 tons. Massey’s figures showed that at a wind force of 56 lbs per foot, the tower’s minimum weight should be 1,390 tons. That the tower has stood safely for more than a century has proved the accuracy of their calculations. There was no framework to the tower, and no external scaffolding. Wooden shuttering moulds six inches high were filled with concrete and bolted together in vertical rows of three where the walls were to stand. When the concrete had set in the bottom mould the shuttering would be unbolted and placed on top of the remaining two, then filled. Working from the inside, the walls rose steadily. Iron rods were inserted where floors were built. Different sizes of moulds were made for cornices, steps, etc. So as not to hinder progress Peterson devised a system of making the blocks in advance, then allowing eight days for hardening. As the walls grew, buckets of building material were hauled up by a horse-drawn rope and pulley system. Building of the tower was well advanced when Peterson became concerned about the shortage of shingle. Supplies from local gravel pits proved to be insufficient and shingle was “borrowed” from nearby Milford on Sea beach.

At ground level on the east and west sides the tower is flanked by buildings with Gothic doorways. The lower part of the tower was to include a picture gallery with a room above topped with a cornice. Further cornices were added as the tower progressed, and each section lit by a vertical line of slender lancet windows. A red pigment was added to the concrete for the window surrounds, but time and the elements have faded the colour. All 330 steps were separately moulded and incorporated into the walls as the building grew. They are contained as a spiral staircase in a hexagonal on the north side of the tower. Altogether the tower contains eleven rooms and thirteen floors. Peterson’s concern for safety led him to introduce internal scaffolding as work neared the top. He was uncertain how the tower should be finished, and wavered between topping it off with a spire, cone or dome.
Eventually he decided on an octagonal tower two storeys high with a small domed roof. His plan to place a light at the top was disallowed by Trinity House. The tower is very visible from the Solent, and it could have been mistaken by shipping for a lighthouse.

The tower was completed in about 1885 which fortunately coincided with the building of the rail link between Brockenhurst and Christchurch, so the workmen no longer required by Peterson were able to find other employment.

Andrew Peterson died in London in 1906. Arnewood Towers and twenty two acres were bequeathed to his youngest grandson William. His two older grandsons pre-deceased him. William died in 1909 and the property passed to his father, Col. Charles Johnston who died the same year. Although Peterson’s granddaughter Charlotte was still alive, a cousin of her father, General James Johnston inherited. The tower remained in the family until 1957 when a Mr J. G. Stanton purchased it for £100. He thought it would be “rather nice to own a thing of this sort.” He also enjoyed the wonderful views from the top which is reckoned to be about eleven inches out of true. In 1973 the tower was bought by the present owner for £2,750. In the great storm of 1987 the tower suffered some damage when two concrete blocks fell to the ground. A grant of £12,000 was given for repairs by the New Forest District Council in 1991. It is a Grade 2 listed building. In the early 1990s an attempt to turn it into a restaurant and bed and breakfast concern was short lived, and today it is a private residence and not open to the public.

Sources


Mr Jude James of Hordle who kindly provided information.
Andrew Thomas Turton Peterson

an innovative man

Andrew Thomas Turton Peterson was an interesting and innovative man rightly deserving a place in the fascinating history of our area.

A successful barrister, he also studied spiritual healing and mesmerism with a Mrs Olive in London, but this had adverse effects when he believed the illnesses of his subjects transferred to him. In 1872 Mrs Girling and the New Forest Shakers arrived in nearby Vaggs Lane. Although the beliefs of Mrs Girling and Peterson were on different levels, it is interesting to note that an attempt was made by a Lymington doctor to have her certified, one of the charges laid against her being that of mesmerism. She was acquitted. In 1885 Edward King of Lymington published his book, “Essays From the Unseen, Delivered Through the Mouth of W.L., a Sensitive, and Recorded by A.T.T.P.” The “controls” speaking through William Lawrence, a London meat porter, were many and various, including Pythagoras, Plato, Julius Caesar and Brutus and religious figures such as Jesus, Buddha and John Knox. Other prominent people through the ages were Shakespeare, Raleigh, Alexander Pope, Thomas Paine and, supposedly, Christopher Wren who gave him the inspiration to build a tower.

Peterson and his wife Charlotte had an only child, a daughter Anna. Both Anna and her husband lived with her parents at Arnewood Towers with their young daughter, also named Charlotte. On the tower’s ground floor, lifting stones give access to a vault intended by Peterson to be a mausoleum for himself and his wife. However, Mrs Peterson preferred a conventional burial and lies in St Luke’s churchyard in Sway. When Peterson died in 1906, he was cremated at Woking and his ashes placed in the tower vault. In 1957 permission was granted by the Home Office for the removal of Peterson’s ashes which were placed in his wife’s grave. (see photo on rear cover)

The Peterson family plot lies to the right of the lychgate entrance, and reveals an intriguing slant on Peterson’s private life. A small tablet inside the plot reads, “Catherine Peterson Wilson (Cassie) 1878-1970 Rests With Her Father A.T.T.P.” Subsequent enquiry disclosed that at the age of sixty-five Peterson fathered a daughter by a lady he met in London. Mrs Peterson was still alive at the time, and their daughter Anna was about thirty-seven years old. He apparently took care of Catherine and her mother, setting them up in their own house.

Anne Biffin
BOOK REVIEW

The New Forest Painters
by Georgina Babey

This is a large format book showcasing the work of six artists and their passion for the Forest put in context by knowledgeable natural history notes from author Georgina Babey. Already well known for her illustrated social histories, the author provides a more than competent and lively account of much that makes the New Forest special. This is a book that will offer a great deal to both the lay reader keen to learn about the flora and fauna and to anyone who appreciates its artistic interpretation.

Two of the artists, Barry Peckham and Richard Tratt, who have had their work published before, provide the majority of the images. However paintings by other artists offer contrast and many of the smaller studies are very fine indeed. The paintings, predominantly oil and water colours but including acrylic and pen and ink, have been grouped by subject and linked by a narrative text. The five sections are Woodland; Heathland and Lawns; The Working Forest; Mires, Rivers and Ponds; Coastlines and Estuaries. All present a well balanced picture of what makes this National Park a special place. Brief biographies complete the work.

The New Forest Painters
hb, 132 pp, is published by Langford Press at £38
(ISBN 978-1 904078-33-3)
and may be obtained from local bookshops,
or from Richard and Hilary Tratt
on 01425 652100 or at rtratt@btinternet.com
Volunteers Wanted

Can you give a few hours to help the Association?

There are two ways in which we hope that you may be able to do so. We have a number of ongoing tasks with which additional help would be most valuable.

New opportunities are arising as we reshape some of our activities, but there is need also to ease the burden on our over-worked colleagues.

In addition, we would very much like to have a pool of volunteers upon whom we can call occasionally and, perhaps, at quite short notice. For instance, it would be very helpful to have people available to come in to staff the NFA stand at the summer shows when one of the planned volunteers is unable to attend.

If you can assist in any way at all, please get in touch with Michael Chilcott, our Secretary, or me. Full contact details for both of us are on page 26.

Peter Roberts

Your Ten for Starters - The Answers

1. 1963
2. 63,814 acres (25,825 hectares)
3. Judge Jeffreys
4. 700 — nearly 33% of the total found in Britain
5. Captain Frederick Marryat
6. Ashley Cross
7. Opened: 1st June 1847 / Closed: 4th May 1964
8. Charles Kempe, William Morris, Edward Burne-Jones
9. Diurnal
10. 1997
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Finance and General Purposes  - Peter Roberts
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Planning  - Graham Baker

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Looking across Selworthy to Exmoor beyond

Graham Long
(see page 8)

A skillfully angled stump avoids rot

Peter Roberts
(see page 10)

Richard Reeves introduces the afternoon walk from Bolton’s Bench, Lyndhurst at this year’s AGM in April.

Graham Long
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Published by the New Forest Association
Founded 1867 and Registered Charity No. 260328.
Opinions expressed in the NFA newsletter
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Printed by EPS Print & Design, Ringwood