



*Photo P Roberts*

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# NEW FOREST ASSOCIATION

## Newsletter

### Winter 2009/Spring 2010



The light railway  
at Warwick Slade  
helping to reinstate  
stream meanders  
- a joint project by  
FC/NFNPA/NE/  
EA

*Photos P Roberts*

# FOREST FACTS

The New Forest National Park has 90 of the 120 valley mires remaining in north-west Europe

There are between 6,500 and 7,000 commoners' animals grazing on the Open Forest at different times of the year



15 million people live within a 90 minute drive of the New Forest

The oldest tree in the Forest is a common yew which grows in Brockenhurst churchyard and is believed to be 1000 years old



The National Park boundary stretches into the sea. At low-tide it extends to the salt marshes along the coast at Pennington



left - Catherine Chatters launching the New Forest Non-Native Plants Project. See page 14 for the full story.



Himalayan balsam  
Photo: GBNNS



Japanese knotweed  
Photo: GBNNS



American skunk cabbage  
Photo: GBNNS



Giant Hogweed  
Photo: C Chatters



New Zealand Pygmyweed  
Photo: Peter Llewelyn

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## Diary Dates 2010

AGM & Member's Day - Sat April 17th  
**NEW** - Member's Event Day at Foxlease - Sat  
Oct 23rd

More details of the above events and summer 2010 shows will follow - or visit the Association website for all the latest information and event timings:

**[www.newforestassociation.org](http://www.newforestassociation.org)**

## LETTERS

*The "From the Archives - 50 years ago" feature in the last issue of the Newsletter brought an unexpected response from the sister of the past chairman of the NFA, George A Jonas. Her letter is below.*

Dear Ms Babey

I have been a member of the NFA for 51 years, one of the 660 conscripted by my brother George Jonas in 1958.

Over the years I have had so much pleasure reading the Newsletter and reviving many happy memories of my childhood. We lived at *Avonside* "down the hill" from Godshill and the road to Fordingbridge, and from a very early age (for those days) I was allowed to roam the Forest on my pony - went hunting with Mrs (Lottie) Loader at Blissford and the Gipsies (proper ones) who camped in Latchmore Bottom were my friends!

I went back recently with my daughter, revisiting old haunts, especially the Royal Oak at Fritham which was my brother's special "watering hole". I found the Forest surprisingly little changed which is entirely thanks to the hard work all you dedicated Foresters have put in to keep the Forest safe. Keep it up!

Best Wishes

Pam Greene (Mrs)

Bury St Edmunds

To the Editor

I would like to know what the New Forest Association's thoughts are on ragwort. This is becoming more and more rampant on roadsides where it is not cleared. In some villages it is cleared sometimes by the schoolchildren, which is excellent - here by two OAP's.

If it gets into the Forest it will spread like wildfire and change the Forest as we have known it for years.

Sincerely

Audrey Vickery

Woodgreen

# **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

**William Ziegler**

## **Camping**

In the last newsletter I reported on the fact that Forest Holidays wanted to introduce mobile shops into some of their campsites, a development we were strongly opposed to. As it turned out many others were as well, and I am happy to say that the Verderers' court rejected the application. We welcome this outcome and the fact that so many other individuals and Forest bodies felt the same way as the Association.

## **Cycling**

The problem of cyclists riding at will on the open Forest is not new, and when approached and told that they are not allowed to they will normally say they did not realise and that they won't do it again. How often they are actually sorry is difficult to say but I believe that the majority of visitors to the Forest are prepared to act responsibly as long as they are told how to do so.

Sadly there are also those who, when challenged, will just metaphorically or otherwise raise a two finger salute and just continue on their way. I can only assume that these selfish individuals do so in the belief that their rights to do what they want is more important than the welfare of the Forest, an assumption recently confirmed by a conversation I had with a cyclist I stopped in the middle of the Forest.

What particularly concerned me in this instance was that the cyclist, a middle-aged man, was apparently well educated with a working knowledge of the Forest and totally relaxed about saying that he knew the bye-laws but was happy to deliberately flout them as he felt that the damage he was doing was so little it did not matter. It was also obvious that he knew that the chances of facing prosecution were somewhere between nil and zero.

To be honest, this is an attitude that in my younger days I might have partially shared but unlike him I have grown to realise that it is not my actions alone that matter but the cumulative actions of my and the ever increasing number of people using the Forest that threatens this wonderful place. Sadly, this is an attitude that relates not just to cyclists and extends to a sizeable minority who use the Forest and obviously

feel that they have the right to treat the Forest as their playground and disregard its special qualities, value and fragility.

How we persuade people to take responsibility for their actions is difficult, with education being the most obvious way. However for some this is not enough and it needs to be backed up with direct action as well, with the byelaws being imposed to ensure that those who are prepared to ignore them understand that their damage of the Forest will have consequences.

### **Stewardship Scheme**

In our last newsletter I referred to the fact that the Verderers were in discussion with Natural England and DEFRA about both the renewal of the Stewardship Scheme and its upgrading to the Higher Level Scheme. This has moved closer with the Court of Verderers having resolved, in principle, to transfer their current Countryside Stewardship Scheme to a Higher Level Stewardship Scheme (HLS).

Oliver Crosthwaite Eyre, our President and the Official Verderer, said:

*“We have been discussing the future of our current scheme with DEFRA and Natural England. The existing agreement with DEFRA has a finite life span of ten years, and it is due to end in 2013. Therefore, because of the uncertainties that surround the future funding of any similar replacement, we have decided to look at ending the scheme early in order to sign up next year for a fresh ten year period rather than risk being told in 2013 that there is no more money. We have been very strongly advised by DEFRA that this is the best course of action, and Natural England has given us its unequivocal support in seeking to sign-up to a replacement scheme as early as January next year. The new scheme will have much wider scope for funding not just the existing payments to commoners as Open Forest graziers, but other land management projects throughout the Forest. The HLS scheme is very exciting news and it will be the biggest conservation and land management scheme in Europe.”*

Presuming the application is successful the total funding would hopefully be between £1,000,000 and £2,500,000 per annum for 10 years. The actual amount will depend on the deal worked out and the projects put forward. If used wisely, this new and substantial source of funding for the Forest could bring great long term benefits and we wish

all those involved success in trying to secure it.

## **NPA**

Following the sudden departure of Lindsay Cornish as Chief Executive Officer of the National Park Authority, Mr Barrie Foley was appointed an Interim Chief Executive Officer in July, initially for a period of six months during which time a new permanent CEO would be sought.

The recruitment process has started with interviews being held, but as yet no announcement has been made. Given the antagonism there has been towards the Authority the choice of the correct person for this role is more important than ever and we can only hope that candidates of a suitable quality have put themselves forward.

## **Campsite survey**

The survey of the Forest Holidays campsites mentioned two newsletters ago is well underway, with the mapping of the infrastructure nearly complete. Attention is now moving to the mapping of all the trees, which could not be done earlier as the GPS mapping equipment works best when there are no leaves on the trees. All being well this project will be completed by the end of the year and will be immensely useful as an accurate baseline survey which can be used as a basis for a regular audit of the sites to check for unauthorised changes and to monitor their overall condition.

## **A BRAND NEW MEMBER'S EVENT planned for next autumn**

Following on from the success of our hosting of the National Parks Association's Annual Conference in 2008 at Foxlease Girl Guide Centre in Lyndhurst, we wanted to give NFA members the same chance to experience the ambience of this remarkable building.

A talk on the history of the building will be given by Suzie Moore, who has been associated with Foxlease for most of her life, refreshments from local sources will be on offer, as well as a chance to mingle with other NFA members, plus a tour of the grounds if weather permits. Many experts in different fields will be available for question or comment on various aspects of the Forest. **OCTOBER 23rd 2010**. More details will appear in future NFA publications and on the website.

# A FOREST UNDER PRESSURE

Graham Long

There is no doubt that this area of outstanding natural beauty, and international ecological importance, is under pressure. The roar of traffic on the A31 and A35 carries for a considerable distance and flights from local airports drone heavily overhead. Summer congestion around Lyndhurst calls out for a relief road, but where can it be put without cutting down swathes of woodland? In many places the skyline reveals the peaks and troughs of the industry lining Southampton Water. At night, the amber glow of the lighting in the large towns surrounding the Forest obscures the Milky Way. By day, the influx of visitors - walkers, cyclists, those exercising dogs, and horse riders - wear away at the ground. And now, the unremitting toll of animal deaths is leading to demands for yet more fencing.

It is true that the Forest has always been under pressure. In origin it was set apart for the hunting pleasure of the king. Later it was prized as a resource for the mediaeval construction industry, and by the builders of warships, who coveted its fine timbers. Naval strategists exhibiting far sightedness, and a fair measure of military nervousness, saw its heaths as a splendid nursery site for the continuous supply of the variety of woods needed to build, repair and provision the nation's main defence force. Still later, commercial exploitation transformed its woodlands, and swathes of heath land were brought into cultivation. The impact of 20th century conflicts had a much more dramatic effect, leaving lasting scars across the breadth of the Forest.

Through many centuries the ground beneath was valued as much as the trees above. Romans dug it out to make pottery, clays were used in many villages for brick making, marl was spread on the fields and used in the construction of cob cottages. The abundance of gravel and sand were a huge attraction. The herbiage on the surface was not wasted. Bracken, heather and gorse all had their uses, and many plants found their way into herbal remedies.

In Victorian times, the collecting zeal of amateur naturalists drove birds and butterflies to the point of extinction, while fossil hunters dug deep

into the Barton clays in search of perfect specimens. Railways split the Forest apart and, more recently road improvements have further divided it. And, of course, the commoning of ponies, cattle and sheep, and pannage for pigs, all exploited the Forest and, in doing so, helped to shape the landscape we know today.

Add to all of this the way in which village life has been transformed by incomers, and re-gearred for the tourist. In common with many other areas, an attractive rural setting hiked house prices and changed the nature of communities. A knock-on consequence is changing the countryside still more, as equestrian use alters pasture into paddock, and occupies meadows with stabling and exercise rings.

In the face of this long history, it would be very easy to become resigned to the inevitable. Indeed, some will argue that change is of the very essence of the countryside. Past generations had only economic advantage as their guide, so why think that things should be any different today? After all, we still have the Forest don't we? I sense something of this reasoning in the arguments that ranged against the draft proposals of the National Park Authority's plans.

Truth to tell, though, the Forest isn't what it used to be even in the balmy days before the possibility of climate change was on the agenda. There is a sense of restriction everywhere that would have appalled writers about the Forest a century ago. Much of its quaintness has gone, illustrated by the relatively few cottages and views that turn up in brochures, guides and calendars. However, some things are better. The fencing of the major roads and an overall reduction in speed elsewhere has reduced the carnage that really was horrendous 50 years ago, involving both animals and people. The former widely assumed freedom to drive or park or camp where the whim led did spoil many areas and it is good that bye-laws now shepherd towards car parks and properly equipped camp sites. The Forest had some awful housing at that time and that has largely gone. But can it be said that the villages and towns have also been improved? There are, of course, complex economic factors involved but in built design, and in the dross that is offered the visitor in so many shops, there are grounds to suggest that what we have today does not live up to the Forest's reputation or potential.

So also with the countryside. It is splendid that the Life project has restored streams and wetlands that were corrupted in past years, European support for this being one measure of the ecological importance of the whole area. The Forestry Commission is to be encouraged strongly to sustain vigorously its 80 year plan for woodland regeneration. The National Park must press ahead with its overall management plan.

The ‘New Forest’, however, is a larger entity than the National Park. The in-fighting that has emerged within the Park’s own management, and between the Park and a number of self-interest groups, is to be deplored. The needs of the New Forest cry out for a greater sense of responsibility. Its future demands a full measure of co-operation between all appointed to its management and all who claim to love it.

*Fordingbridge, August 2009*

## **Volunteer Sought**

**We are looking for a volunteer to help catalogue the New Forest Association archives held in the Christopher Tower Library, New Forest Centre, Lyndhurst. A couple of hours a week would be of great assistance and you would learn much about the history of our organisation. NFA, founded in 1867, is the second oldest conservation organisation in Britain, pipped to the post only by The Open Paths Society.**

**If you are interested, please contact William Ziegler, Chairman (details on page 16) or Richard Reeves, NFA member and librarian, on 023 8028 6150 or email:**

**[library@newforestcentre.org.uk](mailto:library@newforestcentre.org.uk)**

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# **MEMBERSHIP & DEVELOPMENT REPORT**

**Georgina Babey**

## **Summer Shows**

At recent meetings of the M&D committee we looked at our performance at 2009 summer shows. More than £900 was taken during the year, but a disappointing number of new members were recruited. We would like to take on more shows next year, but a maximum of 8 was felt to be wise, since providing enough personnel to erect and man the stands is always an issue. We have booked for Copythorne (Sun. June 13th 2010) and, of course, will do the New Forest Show and Romsey. If you have a fête or event in your area that you think it would be worth our while to attend, do let us know.

## **Merchandise**

The committee are looking into the cost of polo shirts or ties which would carry the NFA logo. Stocks of NFA Xmas cards are very low. There was a general reluctance to spend £1200, a quote obtained by Graham Baker, for another set of similar cards. It was suggested that just one new card each year be produced, to be aimed solely at members, with any surplus stock being offered for sale at summer shows/events the following year. Meanwhile, we will continue to offer Mike Read and Sally Fear's cards at events, as these have sold very well.

## **Social Events 2010**

The AGM & Member's Day is booked for Sat. April 17th 2010 at our normal venue in Minstead but Foxlease - the girl guide centre in Lyndhurst - has been booked for Sat. October 23rd for a brand new members/fundraising event. See page 5 for more details - but we are open to suggestions on how you, the members, would like the day to go.

## **Committee make-up**

The chairman felt that the committee should be a smaller, more dedicated group, each member with a remit to take on particular tasks, or ask others to, as and where the need lies. Some new, keen members willing to take on specific jobs - such as promoting new membership, targeting corporate membership, etc - will be welcomed with open arms.

# HOLMSLEY AIRFIELD MEMORIAL

**Anne Biffin**

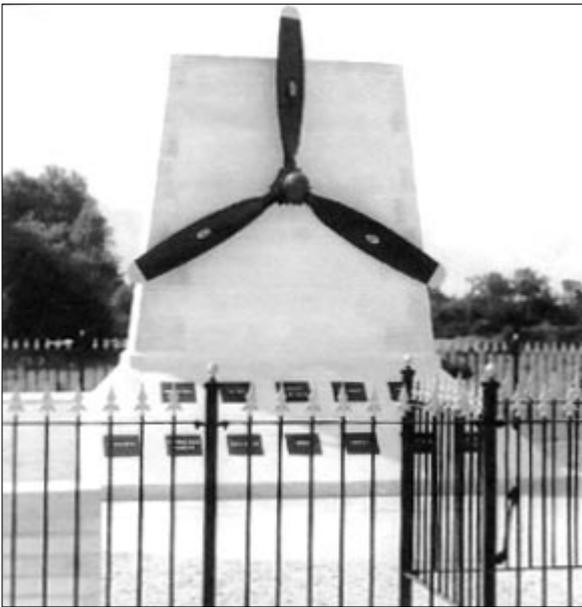
*September 3rd 2009 marked the 70th anniversary of the outbreak of WW2. I thought the following article, written six years ago, would be relevant at this time, and act as a tribute to the great courage and sacrifice made for the greater good by all concerned.*

The hot June day had begun as a strawberry picking expedition at Hinton Admiral. By the right turn for the Holmsley camp site off the A35, a blue sign indicated “Airfield Memorial,” so an investigation was in order. Bearing off the A35 towards Godwincroft, then a right turn to Holmsley camp, a left turn past a small caravan park into Black Lane led to the old Holmsley South airfield. A number of vehicles were parked on remains of the concrete runway where a marshal was handing out leaflets and directing the parking.

The occasion was a remembrance service for the 394th Bomb Group Veterans of the American Air Force, and arranged by the Friends of the New Forest Airfields. A contingent of veteran Americans and their families had come over for the event and were due to arrive for the noon ceremony. In the meantime people were gathering by a splendid white memorial set with a huge propeller and twelve plaques, one for each New Forest airfield. A time capsule containing a piece of wreckage from a Messerschmitt shot down over Milford on Sea, and part of a US Liberator found at Beaulieu Heath, a pilot’s helmet and other WW2 mementos are encased in the rear of the memorial. The whole area is surrounded by gold tipped black railings. The Union flag and the Stars and Stripes fluttered on either side of the memorial which faces the old runway, now returned to grass. To add to the atmosphere, loudspeakers on top of a camper van broadcast Glenn Miller and other wartime music. On the airfield vintage Morris cars, some over sixty years old, gave an extra dimension to the occasion and attracted much admiration. Their owners are mostly ex-servicemen who belong to a Morris car club.

A coach containing the Americans drew up, and the ceremony began.

There were addresses by Les White, the FONFA Chairman, Councillor J. Hutchins, Chairman of the New Forest District Council, the Mayor of Christchurch and other dignitaries. The veteran's response was most moving. The men who flew from Holmsley, now in their eighties, stood to attention at the salute during the wreath laying ceremony. Major M. Powell responded on behalf of the US Army, and mementoes were exchanged, some being received by family members of deceased servicemen. Brian Woolaston, the chaplain, gave the address and prayers, and the Last Post and Reveille was sounded by Bruce Worthy. Both National Anthems were played followed by a final blessing by the chaplain.



Before the Americans left for Appletree Court where they were being entertained to a buffet lunch, there was an opportunity to shake hands and speak with some of the veterans. Childhood memories were renewed of “Got any gum chum,” packets of Lifesaver sweets and chocolate thrown from the passing trucks, and the endless convoys prior to the push for D-Day. It was a poignant

occasion for everyone, and it was a privilege to have been there at the right time, and to have taken part.

The grid reference for the memorial on the Ordnance Survey New Forest Outdoor Leisure Map is 209988



# **PLANNING REPORT**

**Peter Roberts**

## **National Park Plan**

The virtually re-written National Park Plan has been issued as a much weakened document. In an attempt to appease those who don't put the Forest first many of the long term protection ideas have been ditched. The tone of the new document is 'look after people first and the Park second' forgetting the reasons, unique culture and landscape, that the area was designated a National Park. We have made representations directly to Authority members as well as Officers and hope to see improvements before the final version is approved this winter.

Perhaps of greater importance are the policies contained in the Core Strategy. Our hope is that these will be sufficiently strong to protect the Forest in the coming years. We shall make every endeavour to ensure that they are as robust as possible.

We were pleased to see that the application for an over-large new dwelling under the Commoners Housing scheme mentioned in the last Newsletter was withdrawn and we understand that a scaled-down proposal is under-way.

## **Paulton's Park**

Two of the Planning Committee attended a high quality debate of the National Park Planning Committee at which three Paultons applications were discussed. The debate teased out the real points of contention as well as an understanding of the benefits of such a facility on the edge of the National Park. The applicants for their part perhaps made a mistake (apart from failure to apply for planning permission for some aspects of their business) in including too much in one application. It was fairly clear that one of the rides was acceptable to most of the members as well as a limited extension of the area termed 'Amusement Park'. It will be interesting to see how any appeal or re-application fairs.

## **Dibden Bay**

As with so many subjects in the New Forest this has been put back on the agenda, in this case by Associated British Ports including it in their

long term planning document. We are in the process of making an initial response to it. It is not seen as a threat for a considerable period but any inquiry into an application for port usage of the area would trigger the Government's new Infrastructure Planning Commission.

### **Bournemouth Airport Draft Noise Action Plan**

The entirely appropriate acronym for this plan met with a robust response. It wasn't really so much a consultation on a plan as a record of how they handle complaints. There was little in the way of thought as to how things might be improved. We suggested limiting night flying and experimenting with angles of descent and flight paths as possible means of improving the situation. It was noticeable that because of their existing flight paths more complaints were received from Burley and Bransgore than Bournemouth and Poole despite the disparity in populations.

### **Oversize out-buildings**

A request for a Certificate of Lawful Use for a building in Woodgreen provided an opportunity to remind the Park Planners why we are so concerned about two storey and large out-buildings. This particular one was apparently intended for carers but when not needed was let out and has escaped the normal planning process.

### **Members help wanted**

We ask our members to be vigilant and advise us of unlawful use of buildings. Four years of uninterrupted living is required before a Certificate of Lawful Development for a dwelling can be issued. If an investigation is made, whether any illegal use is found or not, then the clock is re-set and the four year period re-starts. It could well help preserve our villages from being misused by the addition of unsightly outbuildings which are being used illegally for residential purposes. Much good work has been done by enlarging and improving the Conservation Areas around the New Forest; it is important that that work is not undermined. The New Forest Association is, for its part, setting up a database to monitor planning conditions.



# NEW FOREST NON-NATIVE PLANTS PROJECT

As NFA members are well aware, the New Forest is one of the most important areas for wildlife in Western Europe but its rivers and wetlands are threatened by an invasion of non-native plants. Japanese knotweed, giant hogweed, Himalayan balsam, American skunk cabbage and New Zealand pygmyweed were introduced to the UK to be grown as ornamental garden plants or, in the case of New Zealand pygmyweed, as an oxygenator for garden ponds, but they have jumped the garden fence and invaded the countryside.

They grow vigorously, spread rapidly and can quickly elbow-out our native wildflowers which provide important food and nectar for invertebrates. If left un-checked these invasive plants can devastate large areas, causing problems for farmers, graziers, fishermen and everyone who wants to enjoy our countryside.

Recognising these problems, the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust has recently joined forces with other conservation organisations to form the New Forest Non-Native Plants Project. The Project was officially launched on 22 May 2009 to coincide with International Day for Biological Diversity which, this year, highlighted the problems caused by invasive species.

Catherine Chatters has been appointed as the New Forest Non-Native Plants Officer and is already getting out and about meeting landowners, graziers and fishermen and assessing the extent of the problem.

“I am delighted at people’s enthusiasm for tackling the spread of these invasive plants” says Catherine “and I’m keen to hear from other people in the New Forest area who have problems with these plants so we can discuss how the Project might be able to help”.

Action has already started to eradicate Himalayan balsam along the Lymington River. During June a band of keen volunteers enthusiastically pulled up hundreds of plants growing on the river bank at Brockenhurst. “Himalayan balsam produces seed pods which explode to shoot out their seeds quite a distance. If they fall into the river they can be carried downstream to germinate and form new colonies” says Catherine. “It is

therefore really important to weed out these plants before they start to flower and produce seed”.

Luckily Himalayan balsam can be pulled up easily so if you enjoy spending time outside and have a few hours to spare, why not join like-minded people next summer on a volunteer working party? The Project web-page on the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust’s web-site will keep you up to date about opportunities to help with the battle against Himalayan balsam.

Help is also needed to plot the distribution of these problem plants. They are easy to identify so you do not need to be an expert botanist. Recording cards are available from Catherine or, if you prefer, you can submit your records electronically via the Project web page.

**To find out more about the Project, please visit the web-page at <http://www.hwt.org.uk/pages/new-forest-non-native-plants-project.html>**

Catherine Chatters, the New Forest Non-Native Plants Officer can be contacted on: 023 8042 4205 or via e-mail at [catherinec@hwt.org.uk](mailto:catherinec@hwt.org.uk)

The New Forest Non-Native Plants Project is a joint partnership between the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, Forestry Commission, Environment Agency, Natural England, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and the New Forest National Park Authority who are contributing financially through core funding and the Sustainable Development Fund.

***See inside front cover for pictures of Catherine Chatters launching the project and some of the invasive species.***



### **DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE**

The **deadline** for copy to be included in the summer/autumn 2010 edition of the newsletter is **31st May, 2010**. Please send letters, articles and views to The Editor, Georgina Babey, Sirius, Hatchet Close, Hale, Fordingbridge, SP6 2NF, **email:** [geebabey@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:geebabey@tiscali.co.uk).

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[www.newforestassociation.org](http://www.newforestassociation.org)

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**Planning** - Chairman - Peter Roberts

**Membership & Development** - Chairman - Georgina Babey

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