

Our Past, Our Future

Working together for the New Forest

NEWSLETTER

JULY 2017

Our Past Our Future is a Heritage Lottery Fund scheme which is being led by the New Forest National Park Authority in partnership with 10 other organisations.

The 21 projects will help to restore lost habitats, develop Forest skills and inspire a new generation to care for the Forest.

Keep reading to find out about some of the key successes so far.

Top right, teaching the next generation of commoners. Below, young commoners building a pound for livestock.



A Landscape Partnership to ensure the New Forest's distinctive landscape survives despite future change and modern-day pressures.

Projects started at the beginning of 2016 and the infographic on the centre spread gives a visual representation of some of the key achievements since the projects began.

This newsletter also outlines some of the progress that has been made through a number of the projects.

The work continues this year, key upcoming events include:

- Exhibition and activities at the New Forest Show (25-27 July) which will be celebrating the 800 year anniversary of the Charter of the Forest and welcoming the Woodland Trusts Charter for Trees, Woods and People. In the Autumn the exhibition will continue at the New Forest Centre in Lyndhurst.
- New Forest Knowledge Conference (27-28 October 2017) at the Lyndhurst Community Centre, which will celebrate the archaeological work and research being carried out in the New Forest.
- Volunteer task days to remove Himalayan Balsam along the Avon Water, Cadnam and Lymington rivers will be held throughout the summer.
- Numerous courses are planned for the remainder of the year including land management courses and traditional building skills.
- Volunteers and local community groups will be recording and assessing the condition of gravestones and monuments in several churchyards across the Forest.

Newsletter produced by the New Forest National Park Authority on behalf of the OPOF partners



New Forest Land Advice Service

A better boundary

Hedgerows and other boundary features provide corridors for wildlife and act as the stitching that holds together the patchwork of the many habitats that make up the countryside. They also add beauty and character to the landscape and provide a significant contribution to the local distinctiveness of the area. Hedgerows are of particular importance for the conservation of farmland and woodland birds, and for mammals but over recent years, field and domestic boundaries in the New Forest have been changing in their nature. The result of this is a gradual change in character of the Forest, particularly around the periphery, as well as a loss in the traditional skills for managing hedges and ditches, a lack in understanding of why these boundaries are important and a large reduction in the ecological corridors that once provided a backbone for wildlife in the New Forest.

The New Forest Land Advice Service (NFLAS) is now working with farmers, commoners and landowners in the New Forest to maintain these historic landscape features. Hedgelaying, coppicing and planting up of gaps are some of the traditional techniques being used to manage hedgerows in order to ensure their longevity as wildlife habitat, stock proof barriers and wildlife corridors.

A number of hedges have already been restored and enhanced during the last 12 months and the pictures show some of the results at Hyde and Godshill. These hedges are now showing good growth of hedge plants which means more nectar for invertebrates such as bees and butterflies, more

berries for birds and mammals in the autumn, and attractive field boundaries. The laid, staked and binded hedges have been improved visually because of the traditional hedge management that has been done, and these are providing a talking point for the local community.

Above- Fieldfare eating berries



Laid hedge, Hyde



Laid hedge,
Godshill



Explore the New Forest's past on foot and discover some fascinating heritage

Historic Routes in the New Forest

The New Forest National Park Authority is working with a team of volunteers to investigate the history behind the rights of way in the New Forest National Park.

The Park has 325km of rights of way but little is known about their origins or historical importance. This project will not create new rights of way but will create five new trails using the existing network. Each trail will be enhanced to highlight particular points of interest along their route either through signage, information boards, leaflets and/or through guided walks led by members of the local communities, Rangers and volunteers.

Volunteers have been recruited and will be researching rights of way across the Park. All volunteers will receive training to give them the skills necessary to gather the historic evidence that the project needs. Then over the coming year they will be busy examining historical maps such as early OS and Tithe maps that are held by the Hampshire and Wiltshire Record Offices. The volunteers will record what they find and highlight any notable historic events or features. The evidence will then be assessed to select the best and most interesting rights of way that should be examined in more detail. During

the second phase volunteers will walk these rights of way to observe and record the landscape features of interest and the condition of the path. Ongoing community involvement will help identify and collect further evidence such as photographs, written records, memories and stories. Those paths with the most robust historical evidence, modern need and significant heritage value will be taken forward for promotion, interpretation and possible improvements or enhancements.

If you have photographs of or a story to tell about your local right of way or are interested in volunteering for this project contact the OPOF team.



Great achievements have been made during the first year, some are highlighted here.

Our Past, Our Future

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NEW FOREST ARTS FESTIVAL
3,800
people took part
in the first New
Forest Arts
Festival

RURAL SKILLS

173

people trained in
traditional rural skills



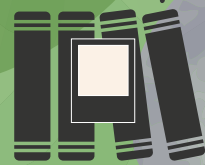
New Forest Knowledge

Portal being developed to provide
public access to information about
the heritage of the New Forest

BIODIVERSITY MONITORING
143
animal species
recorded,
including the rare
barbastelle bat



NEW FOREST
4,370
historical
New Forest
documents and
photos scanned



WORKING WOODLANDS

35 hectares
of woodland
restored across
8 sites

FOXBURY: CONNECTING PEOPLE WITH PLACES
9,500
trees planted,
to restore native
woodland



BUILDING SKILLS

190

people trained in
traditional building skills



BETTER BOUNDARIES
1,600m
Hedgerow
restored



600 people visited the Our Past, Future exhibition at New Forest Centre

NON-NATIVE SPECIES
6,800m

River bank along the Avon Water treated for invasive giant hogweed



LIVING WATERS

River Beaulieu catchment regularly monitored for water quality



2016 - 2017



14,877
volunteer hours clocked up

EST ECADENY

at and ned

NATURE'S STEPPING STONES
8 hectares of meadows and heathland enhanced at **14** sites



NEW FOREST CONNECTS



2,000
people took part in the New Forest Walking Festival 2016

ge
ored

REDISCOVERING OUR ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE
1,525
hectares surveyed



CONSERVING THE FOREST FRINGE
275
Dragon's teeth installed in Nomansland

300m

Ditching reinstated

Focus on Commoning

Commoners are a community of small holders and farmers who have the right to graze their animals on the open lands of the New Forest. All the animals running free in the New Forest are owned by individual commoners. Commoning ensures the continued beauty and character of the Forest. Without commoners, their animals would not shape the landscape for people to enjoy and wildlife to thrive in. Commoners are working to sustain commoning through the 'Our Past, Our Future' scheme through a number of different projects.

A programme of training courses will give the next generation of commoners and other land managers the necessary knowledge and skills to continue the traditional systems and provide all generations with the new skills required for today's modern-day agricultural requirements. The courses that are being run have been tailored to meet the needs of local farmers, commoners and land managers. During 2016 the New Forest Land Advice Service arranged 26 courses which were attended by 287 individuals, these included courses on sheep breeding, pesticide use, hedgelaying and grassland management.

Experienced commoners across the Forest have teamed up with young and new commoners to pass on their knowledge and to help preserve the Forest's traditional practices. The New Forest Land Advice Service and the Commoners Defence Association set up the first pairings in June

2016. Over the last year the new commoners have spent time on their mentor's land to learn vital commoning skills.

Laura Maughan, 18, from Cadnam, was amongst last year's new commoners, and was learning

from experienced commoner Charlie Knight based in Beaulieu (both pictured opposite page) Laura said: 'The Commoners Mentor Scheme has helped me develop contacts in the Forest and build relationships which provided a valuable opportunity of work experience on a local farm. It has opened my eyes to the different ways of how commoning works in the New Forest. The scheme has improved my own skills and broadened my horizons for my own future career.' The second year of the Scheme has now started and a new set of young and new commoners are now just starting out on their mentoring journey.

A tool kit on commoning is being developed for local primary schools and other educational organisations which will aim to develop a learning programme for children to build a love for the Forest and its uniqueness, and thus develop an understanding of the role that commoning plays in its past, present and future. The aim will be to help children understand the wildlife and scenery of the New Forest and the role that commoning plays in maintaining the area's ecological diversity and landscape. The tool kit will be trialled during the summer term at Hyde Primary School before being made more widely available via the internet.



The Shared Forest
OPEN YOUR EYES

The Shared Forest project is seeking ways to increase public awareness of the damage caused when lack of understanding leads people to behave in ways that may be harmful to the animals, themselves or other people. Employing the techniques of behaviour change, the project is presently focussing on messages around not feeding

New Forest Tourism Association
visits a commoner's small holding



or touching animals and driving with care on open Forest roads. This year will see the launch of a partnership with local businesses to spread advice about safe driving on the roads across the open forest. Six local businesses are engaged as foundation members with the aim to raise awareness amongst their employees and business associates. A Forest-wide launch is planned for the New Forest show in order to engage more local businesses in the project.

'Commoning voices' will aim to tell the story of the commoning community and their animals in their own words. This will include a number of events aimed at raising the profile of the commoning community. An event has already been held with New Forest tourism providers to help them understand commoning so that the key messages can then be cascaded to those visiting the area. Similar events are planned for the next two years including an audio / visual project to bring commoning to a wider audience and 'behind the scenes' events such as 'welcome to my holding' days, family activities, talks and walks run by commoners.

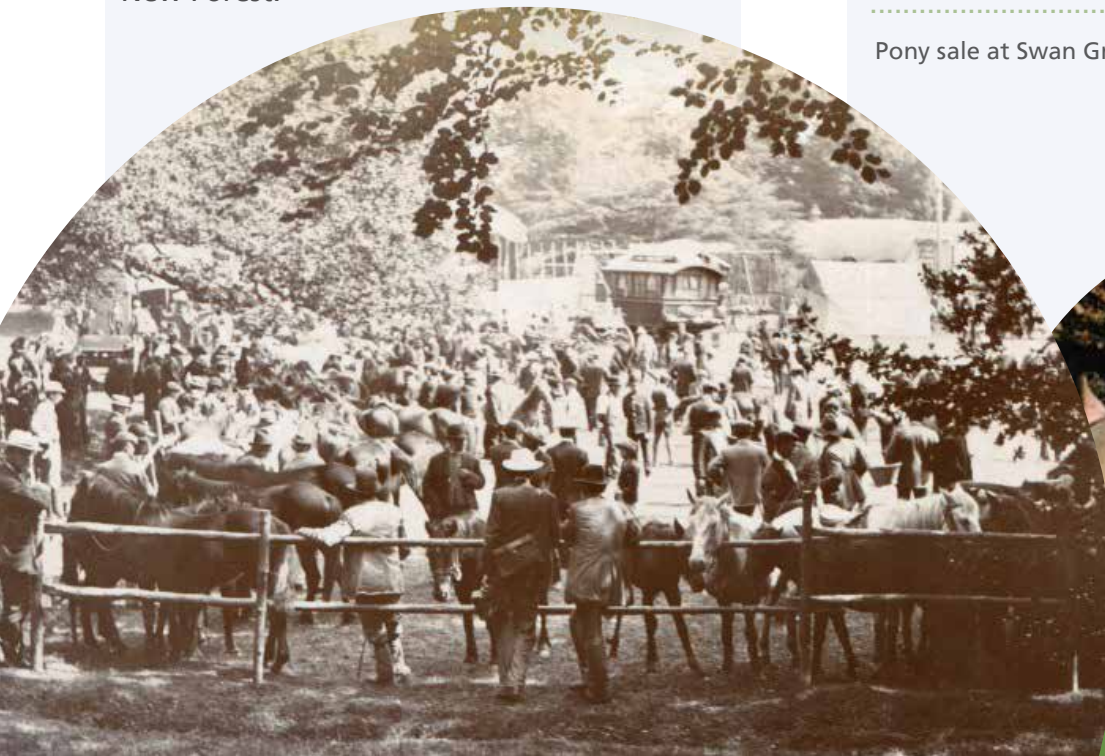
The Through our Ancestor's Eyes project has been collecting and digitising old photographs, associated oral histories and other documents from commoners in order to conserve and catalogue the history of commoning, forestry and agriculture as central to the cultural heritage of the New Forest.



Laura Maughan and Charlie Knight, taking part in the Commoners Mentor Scheme

This will ensure that information on commoning, forestry and the agricultural history of the Forest is saved and made available to future generations. The photograph pictured below, courtesy of Tony Johnson, is the pony sale at Swan Green around the turn of the 20th century, with a fun fair and showman's waggon in the background. The catalogue and many of these digitised documents will be made available to the public through the New Forest Knowledge gateway website. An exhibition to display the results of this project is planned for 2018.

Pony sale at Swan Green



Pigs roam Forest for acorns (Pannage)



New Forest Knowledge

New Forest Knowledge will be an online gateway that will give researchers, students and the local community access to knowledge, data and information about the New Forest. The New Forest Centre is working with the NFNPA to develop this system which is due to be launched in the Autumn. The gateway will become a hub of information and activity. Users will be able to browse the content via a map-based search element and also contribute their own information where relevant.

A team of 20 dedicated people have volunteered more than 500 days of their time. Based at the New Forest Centre they have been digitising the historical collections held by the New Forest Museum and Christopher Tower New Forest Reference Library including documents such as maps, photographs and manuscripts. They have digitised over 5,000 items since the beginning of the project, surpassing the project's initial expectations and rediscovering some of the

wonderful 'hidden gems' in the collections. Fascinating items so far include a copy of renowned



Jill Harvey and Peter Angel admiring the Simmons collection



Books from the Christopher Tower Library

New Forest archaeologist, craftsman and illustrator Heywood Sumner's 'A Guide to the New Forest' containing personal, handwritten letters.

Recent donations include a collection of photographs, medals and memorabilia dating from the First World War. The donor's grandfather, Arthur George Simmons, was stationed at East Boldre. His plane crashed in Beaulieu at the training ground in 1918. One of the volunteers, Jill Harvey remarked "What a fantastic collection. It's amazing to receive this and be able to read about his story" and another volunteer, Peter Angel added "It's such a personal insight".

Digitised items will be made available to the public through the New Forest Knowledge gateway.

Crashed plane at Beaulieu, 1918



The Partnership would like to acknowledge funding from the following



If you want to find out more about any of the projects or volunteering for the Scheme, then please contact the team:

Email Ourpast.ourfuture@newforestnpa.gov.uk
Web newforestnpa.gov.uk/landscape-partnership