

The Friends of the Forster Country

Newsletter

Issue No 32. December 2012

MP's visit

Stephen McPartland MP recently took time out of his busy schedule to meet our Chairman and Vice-Chairman, John Spiers and Stephen Pollock-Hill. The meeting took the form of a stroll through Forster Country on a rather wet afternoon.

Starting from the lych gate of St Nicholas' Church, the group walked up nearly as far as 10 Acre Plantation, which forms the western edge of Chesfield Park, from where views of the Chiltern Hills are possible. On this day they were rather hazy through the late October drizzle.

The group visited the Only Connect sculpture and the Braille notice beside it – both in St Nicholas' churchyard - and the Forster Country information board located at the eastern edge of Chancellors Park.

Stephen is supportive of the aims of The Friends of the Forster Country which are to keep this area of countryside as a green space with literary connections. The question of the fragility of greenbelt boundaries, the current right to bid legislation and the embryonic work on historic and literary landscapes (HALLS – an idea introduced by Stephen Pollock-Hill) were all discussed. Our MP's advice was helpful and his suggestions will be followed.

John Spiers



Photo Kathie Painter

John Hepworth Memorial Lecture

The inaugural Memorial Lecture was held in the impressive Council Chambers of Stevenage Borough Council on the afternoon of Saturday, 24th November. Dr John Catt spoke on Hertfordshire Puddingstone. Dr Catt was a friend and colleague of John Hepworth and has recently published a book on the Geology of Hertfordshire.

The lecture was followed by refreshments in the comfortable Ingleheim Room. We are indebted to Sharon Taylor, Leader of the Council, for permitting us to use these facilities and to Councillor Simon Speller, for long an FOFC sympathiser, for

sponsoring us on this occasion. We also thank him for his impromptu closing words, appropriate and entertaining as they were.

Despite the miserable weather – a Friend from Northolt arrived soaked through two raincoats – the turnout was pleasing - though that did result in a long queue for refreshments. Dr Catt did well to adapt his extensive knowledge to an audience consisting mainly of the geologically uninitiated but question time revealed that a number of comparative experts were also present and eager to know more.

As well as the science, we were

introduced to the mythology surrounding this strange stone and to its practical uses from Roman times onwards. So we all learned something new. The success of the lecture was evident from the number of people keen to engage our lecturer in discussion in the tea-room.

We are grateful to Dr Catt for coming to speak to us and the writer has a special reason for gratitude: as a result of his talk she may be able to find new homes for some of the abducted puddingstone specimens at present residing in her garden.

Angela Hepworth

Photographic Competition

Photographers had a year up to September 2012 in which to capture a winning image from Forster Country. As a result, entries offered a variety of subjects seen at different times of the year. So the display mounted for Prizegiving Evening on 2nd November in the new extension to Great Ashby Community Centre was most attractive and colourful. There were snow scenes and sunsets, details of doorways and tombstones, plants and wildlife, as well as wider landscapes. Even our generally disliked pylons were presented as romantic icons!

There were four judges, all of whom were present at the Prizegiving. Their separate marks were amalgamated to determine the order of merit. The prizes were presented by Stevenage Mayor, John Lloyd. The winning entry, Evening Grazing, came from Stuart Gwinnett of Hitchin and the mayor was presented with a framed copy of it as our thank-you gift.

We were gratified by the response to the competition and impressed by the standard of the entries. We thank all the competitors for taking part, for giving us permission to use their work and for attending the reception. We hope they agree that it was an enjoyable event.



Evening Grazing by Stuart Gwinnett

One Highly Commended entry has been used for our Christmas card this year and we have plans for using more in future. Before long we expect to display all 69 entries in different venues in the town.

Winners

1st *Evening Grazing* by Stuart Gwinnett
2nd *Energy 2* by Jean Brookfield
3rd *Pylon Silhouette* by Dave Hill

Highly Commended

Hunting by Moonlight
by Stuart Gwinnett
St Nicholas by Marion Ohlendorf
Autumn Berries 2 by Aris Mariner

Commended

Poppies in the Corn by Dave Hill
Spring Shade by Richard Derwent
Doorway, St Nicholas' Church
by David Cole

Angela Hepworth

Birthday walk

The annual E M Forster Birthday Walk will take place on Tuesday, January 1st 2013. We shall meet at the lych gate of St Nicholas' Church, Rectory Lane, Stevenage, and start walking at 2 pm.

The walk takes between an hour and an hour and a half (depending on conditions underfoot – it can be rather muddy – and speed of the individual)

and at the end tea and biscuits await in the church's Parish Room. However cold it may be that day you may be sure of a warm welcome and agreeable company.

Do join us if you can; children and dogs welcome but all should come well shod and wrapped up against the elements.

Patrons of the Friends of the Forster Country

Margaret Ashby. Nicola Beaman. Andrew Motion. John Pilgrim. Richard Whitmore

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Newsletter

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