

The Friends of the Forster Country

Newsletter

Issue No 37. September 2014

AGM

The 2014 AGM was held, by kind permission of Anne Newman, at Rooks Nest House on Saturday, 28 June.

The business meeting took place in the shelter of our Vice-Chairman's marquee though the torrential rain had considerably stopped just in time. In his report, the Chairman summarised our activities during the year. Our main concern had, of course, been the possibility of building on Forster Country in order to satisfy Government demands for housing in the area. The idea that designated protected land could be built on and replaced by land elsewhere is, we feel, against the original principle of the Green Belt. We feared the coalescence of towns – Stevenage, Hitchin, Baldock and Letchworth – should the maximum number of homes suggested become a reality. Meetings with planning officials had taken place and our views on the Draft Local Plans made clear, but no decisions have yet been revealed.

Steps have been taken to establish a national Historic and Literary Landscapes organisation, which would



Marion Ohlendorf preparing tea



protect said areas from unsuitable development. This was the brainchild of Stephen Pollock-Hill and has received the support of Clive Aslet, Editor of Country Life magazine.

The Committee was re-elected with the welcome addition of Jim Callaghan. For personal reasons, Margaret Dolan will step down after the Memorial Lecture which she is organising.

Tea and committee-made cakes were served outside the house on the lawn after the official proceedings. Our hostess took an active part in serving the tea and clearing away afterwards so our thanks are this year for more than just

allowing us to meet at E M Forster's childhood home. About 30 people, including our mayor, Sherma Batson, and her consort Howard, braved the damp and were rewarded by entertaining playing from the Freman College Saxophone Quartet and the usual conviviality of our gatherings.



John Spiers presenting a bouquet to Anne Newman.

All photos Margaet Ashby

Apple tree

On a blustery March morning, shortly after the publication of the last Newsletter, a select group gathered in the grounds of the church of St Andrew and St George, Stevenage, to plant an apple tree. It replaces the one planted in memory of Elizabeth Poston in 2005, during the celebrations we held to mark the centenary of her birth. The date chosen was the anniversary of her death.

We were grateful to Churchwarden, Vic Summerfield, and to Museum Curator, Jo Ward, for facilitating this. The tree was donated by Stephen Pollock-Hill, who also did most of the spade work! Harry Hubbard, a Comet photographer, was there and he happily took shots of the event on any camera offered to him as well as producing a good picture for that week's paper. We hope this tree will not suffer the fate of its predecessor i.e. premature death.



Photo The Comet Newspaper

Finance

Thanks to all Friends who have renewed their membership this year and to those who gave extra donations. This enables us to maintain a healthy bank balance.

Concern was expressed at the AGM about the deficit of income over expenditure shown for 2012-2013 (not spotted at last year's meeting) but this was an unfortunate typographical error for which we apologise: figures from a previous year had not been replaced but had simply been carried across and in our haste to produce the papers we had not noticed (for 2 years!). Be assured that there has been a surplus for the past two years.

To those who have not yet sent in their annual subscriptions (£7 for individual and £10 for family membership): it is not too late!

£££

CPRE calendar

We are delighted that Forster Country will feature in the 2015 CPRE calendar. Three photographs from our competition entries were chosen by the Committee. One was autumnal so may determine which month we represent.

Memorial Lecture

The John Hepworth Memorial Lecture will be held on Saturday, November 15th at 2.30 p.m. in the Council Chamber of Daneshill House. The speaker will be Trevor James and his subject will be the flora of Hertfordshire, on which he is a leading expert.

There is no increase in this year's ticket price which remains £3. Tickets may be obtained from Angela Hepworth, Dominic Cottage, Rectory Lane, Stevenage, SG1 4DA; telephone 01438 351462; e-mail angelahepworth@btopenworld.com or from any committee member.

Notice board

A second notice board advising passers-by that they are about to enter Forster Country has been erected. By kind permission of the Fristons (long-term Friends) it has been attached to their boundary fence. See if you can spot it when you are next walking that way.

Library

Plans are afoot to create a collection of books, pamphlets and other documents – our archives – as a reference source. The intention is to catalogue these and store them in chronological order to make access easier when the need for information arises. Margaret Ashby and Anne Conchie are responsible for this initiative and we are most grateful to them. Anne is also constructing an electronic record of FOFC information.

Patrons of the Friends of the Forster Country

Margaret Ashby. Nicola Beauman. Barbara Follett. Sir Andrew Motion. John Pilgrim. Richard Whitmore

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