



# Friends of Attenborough's Fields Autumn 2018 Newsletter

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## A VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

**A**s the year draws to a close it's time for a newsletter.

It has been quite a year which will be remembered for many reasons. The heat and drought of June-August when the grass was reduced to brown stubble. It always amazes me how the grassland and trees perk up when the rains return and by autumn the colours were exceptional.

### New Management Plan for Attenborough's Fields

At the end of September the horses were removed from the fields. The Jordan family had grazed the fields with their horses for around 30 years. The landowners, Hertfordshire County Council, had decided to terminate the tenancy with the graziers, serving notice 6 months previously. Although the horses had kept the grassland well grazed and were generally well looked after, there have been

problems for many years with overgrazing especially in the winter months and numerous problems with horses escaping onto neighbouring land.

The horses are much missed by many people, they were calm and non-threatening with people and dogs. They marked the year with the foals born every spring. The horses were moved to other local sites leased by the graziers.

The future of the fields however is encouraging. The Rural Estates Department for Hertfordshire County Council have commissioned a management consultancy, Maydencroft, to write a new management plan for the site. At the time of writing we are waiting for a draft to comment on. We will keep the membership posted with developments. FOAF had a meeting with Hertfordshire County Council in October and were reassured of the future protection from development of Attenborough's Fields.

Robert Hopkins

1

Membership is due  -

No, all paid

Unfortunately we will lose these iconic images which have made these fields special for the last 25 years.



'I would just like to say I was first involved with Attenborough's Fields in 1992 and the horses had already been there for some time. I, and many others I am sure, am very sorry to see them go and hope the fields will have livestock grazing once again before too long.'

**Sue Evetts**

## **Sunday Work parties**

FOAF continue to meet every first Sunday in the month to undertake practical work on the fields. Much of this year was taken with maintenance to tree guards and fence repairs, tree planting, hedge laying and general upkeep of the fields. You may also have noticed that some of our original oak entrance gates have been replaced with metal gates by HCC as our original gates had become damaged and were beyond repair - unfortunately they are not as attractive

as the oak gates. **If you want to get involved we meet on Oxhey Green at 10.00am every first Sunday in the month.**

## **Amazing trees**

We often overlook the trees in the fields. They provide a background to the view, however looking a little closer they tell their own story. The majority of the trees are pedunculate oak and are arranged along the ancient field boundaries from the late 1700's. The very oldest trees on Attenborough's Fields probably outdate this and could be around 400 years old. These old pollards were cut to a height of 10 foot encouraging regrowth from this point

Other amazing trees include 3 oaks that have been struck by lightning, see photo of one of them. This shows the vertical scar running from top to bottom which has now healed beautifully forming a deep crevasse which is fantastic habitat for invertebrates and roosting bats.



One particular favourite of mine is another oak about 50m east of the entrance by the Oxhey Green playground. A friend calls it Magnus which I think is well suited as it is a truly magnificent and stately tree.

As I have mentioned the majority of trees are oak. This is of concern with new tree pests and diseases occurring. We are currently concerned about oak processionary moth, which can defoliate and weaken the tree, as well as acute oak decline, which is not fully understood, but once again weakens the tree and ultimately will lead to its demise.

Over the last 20 years FOAF have planted many new trees along old

boundaries and in the corners of fields, many are now doing very well. We have tried to diversify species by using other native species such as hornbeam, field maple, small leaved lime, wild cherry and ash (before we became aware of ash dieback). From a conversation regarding the new management plan Herts CC appear to be keen to plant more trees over future years which is good news.  
**Robert Hopkins**



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## **Long hot summer nights**

This year's long hot summer meant that the fields were very used, though not always without litter and debris being left behind.

## **Anyone seen a mini digger?**

In November, we did have one major issue with vandalism. A mini-digger was stolen from a house in Hensby Mews by Oxhey



Green which was then driven through the fence, through the fields and then crashed through the fence onto Merry Hill Road where it is assumed it was loaded onto a trailer. No one appears to have heard or seen anything!

## FOAF Membership application/renewal form

1. Surname:..... Title:..... Forename:..... (will receive newsletter)

2. Surname:..... Title:..... Forename: .....

Please add names of any others at the same address wishing to be included in family membership:

3. Surname:..... Title:..... Forename: .....

4. Surname:..... Title:..... Forename: .....

Address:..... Post Code:..... Tel: .....

Subscription Rates (April - March): Individual membership £2 p.a. or £10 for 5 years  
Family/household membership £3 p.a. or £15 for 5 years

Life membership £50

Corporate/business membership £10 p.a.

I/We wish to apply/renew membership of the Friends of Attenborough's Fields and enclose a cheque, payable to 'Friends of Attenborough's Fields' for:- £.....made up as follows:-

\*Individual/Family/Life Subscription: £..... Donation: £.....

\*Please delete as appropriate. Please detach this form and hand to a committee member or send it to: Pip Player, 62 Kingsfield Road, Oxhey, Watford WD19 4TR.

*We hold membership information electronically for the use of Friends Of Attenborough's Fields only. If you do not wish your details stored in this manner then please tick the box*

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### FOAF Committee members 2018

Robert Hopkins	Chair
Allan Trueman	Vice Chair
John Bowtell	Treasurer
Geraldine Player	Membership Secretary
Chris Beney	Committee Member
Sue Evetts	Committee Member
Andy Purbrick	Committee Member