



# THE FRIENDS OF CHARNWOOD FOREST NEWS



## Winter 2014

Website: [www.focf.org.uk](http://www.focf.org.uk)

**Mission Statement:** To work towards the preservation of the countryside and local environment of Charnwood Forest Regional Park for the benefit of those who live within it, and for those who visit, and for future generations. We aim to be an effective, informative and influential voluntary organisation.

## Old Maps of Charnwood

Our most recent speaker was Keith Ovenden from the Leicestershire Record Office.

In a series of slides of maps dating back to the earliest available (1576), Keith explained in great detail about the development of various attempts to record the area for a variety of purposes.

Particularly interesting is that the 1576 map shows Charnwood Forest to be heavily forested. Some small details are there but no roads are shown. Early maps were riddled with errors. There are many omissions because maps were produced for specific purposes, such as to record estate boundaries (e.g. Beaumanor in 1621), etc. and thus not intended for general use.

There is a 17<sup>th</sup> Century map of Woodhouse with some specific details and of Charley in 1702.

A 1754 map showing most of Charnwood appears to be most interested in the location of rabbit warrens!

The 1808 very substantial documents (weighing 50lbs.) for the Enclosure seem to point to the need for Charnwood Forest to become much more productive and in 1829 the Forest was enclosed. Interestingly, the Enclosure documents are still current law. They are referred to still, when determining rights of way, for example.

Subsequently, all maps are now based on the Ordnance Survey, originally brought about by the Napoleonic Wars. In 1883 the OS began to produce larger scale maps.

Anyone interested in looking at the original or facsimile documents will be welcomed at the Record Office in Wigston.

**#Footnote:** Keith was clearly the knowledgeable expert but, sadly, he was not someone able to project his voice. His talk coincided with an evening when only 3 committee members were present, none of whom anticipated this problem and in any case did not know anything about the sound amplification system available in the hall. Therefore, our sincere apologies to those who were unable to hear the speaker very well. We are taking steps to avoid this problem.

The heading picture this time:

**Wishful thinking?** No - red squirrels have not returned to Charnwood Forest. This one was snapped this October on Brownsea Island in Poole Harbour.

## Featured Speaker

### Ernest Miller returns ...

We have welcomed Ernest Miller to speak to us before. He will return to our meeting on **19<sup>th</sup> January** to talk to us about **Ernest Gimson and Stoneywell**. He is not only an acknowledged expert on Arts and Crafts (engaged by the National Trust to help train staff and volunteers at Stoneywell, for example) but also helps to set the scene for Stoneywell in its Charnwood landscape. So this will be an engaging tale of Stoneywell, its setting and history.

# Stoneywell eventually opened on 3<sup>rd</sup> October and has welcomed many visitors since then. The property is closed to visitors during December and January, re-opening in February.

## TALKS and WALKS

### Our activities for you to enjoy

Individual invitations for each event will be sent to all members by post or email

Indoor meetings take place at Woodhouse Eaves Village Hall at 7.30pm, finishing about 9pm followed by refreshments. Your guests and other non-members are welcome at our talks (for whom we make a small charge of £3 at the door)

## 2015

● **Monday 19<sup>th</sup> January TALK:**  
**ERNEST GIMSON and STONEYWELL**  
by Ernest Miller

● **Monday 16<sup>th</sup> March AGM followed by TALK:** Richard III and the Battle of Bosworth by Richard Knox

● **Monday 20<sup>th</sup> April TALK:** BEAUMANOR HALL & ENIGMA by Mark Baldwin

# More Talks and Walks for 2015 are in course of preparation and will be listed in the next Newsletter, due out in February and on our website: [www.focf.org.uk](http://www.focf.org.uk)

The Committee wish all Friends a Very Happy Christmas and New Year, hoping that, in return, we will receive offers of Volunteers to join us, especially in the roles of Secretary and Events Organiser(s). Thank you.

## All Change ...

Unfortunately, Brian Axon notified us that he was not well enough to come to give his talk in September about his experiences as Stationmaster at Loughborough on the Great Central Railway. We were disappointed of course but we send our best wishes to Brian and hope that he can come at a future date.

### “Swallows and Amazons Forever!”

And so Doug stepped in at short notice with his talk entitled *Arthur, His Stories, and Me*. In an hour, Doug related the life story of **Arthur Ransome**. This comprises much more than the twelve books in the *Swallows and Amazons* series. The talk was illustrated with numerous pictures of the factual and fictional places. Grateful thanks to Kim - our hard working projectionist who assisted to overcome a temporary technical difficulty.



Ransome's turbulent life began in Leeds, featured long family holidays in the Lake District, then school and the Yorkshire College. Here, he discovered in the College Library *The Life of William Morris*. This was the decisive moment of his life and ensured he would become a writer. This link with Morris and therefore the link with Arts & Crafts and so with Stoneywell is particularly interesting, especially because of the presence of a set of the *Swallows & Amazons* books in one of the rooms and the background story there.

After a period working for a London publisher and living the Bohemian life, Arthur married, unhappily, and so went to Russia to pursue an interest in real fairy stories but, there, became a newspaper correspondent between 1913 and 1920, reporting on the War and the Revolution. Escape to the Baltic with Trotsky's secretary Evgenia, who eventually became his second wife. They settled in England and he returned to his main interests - fishing and writing stories. And so to the fascinating background to the 12 *Swallows & Amazons* books.

There are a few tenuous links in the story to Leicestershire and Charnwood but otherwise, Doug offered this as an interesting stop-gap and possibly as a *Ripping Yarn!*

# With acknowledgements to Arthur Ransome and his Estate for the illustration “Despatches” from *Swallows and Amazons*, which depicts the very beginning of all the children's adventures.

## Charnwood Roots

This exciting University-based project - about digging deep into all aspects of the Forest's History (including that of young Charley) - is really gathering momentum. If you'd like to know more, or volunteer, or to receive their very attractive newsletter, get in touch directly - [jad17@leicester.ac.uk](mailto:jad17@leicester.ac.uk)

## Committee Notes

◆ At the November meeting our very best wishes for a full and speedy recovery from his illness were sent to John Kettle, while noting his resignation from the Committee with regret.

◆ “The Way Forward” for the Friends is always an important topic but now it has become particularly urgent as we have insufficient active committee members to ensure a viable future. Of our 200+ individual members it is hoped that 2 or 3 will be willing to join us before the AGM on 16th March (Secretary and Event Organiser(s) in particular).

◆ To encourage more interest, an effort will be made to explain more of the “behind the scenes” activity at each Social meeting. Also to ask for volunteers to come early to help set up the room for meetings, as well as to have a separate catering team. Please offer for these easy tasks!

◆ Dick and Linda would represent FoCF at the Charnwood Forest Regional Park stakeholders meeting.

## PLANNING POINTS

◆ Opposition to proposal for 2 houses at 216A Bradgate Road, Anstey. Developer has already felled mature trees without permission.

◆ Revised application made for 170 houses south of Nanpantan Road, Loughborough.

◆ The Core Strategy for Charnwood Borough is currently being reviewed in detail by Inspectors subject to final approval in March 2015. This will enable objections to have some teeth and not as at present where every refusal goes to Appeal.

## Who's Who?

**Chairman** Dick Howard

[richardhoward342@btinternet.com](mailto:richardhoward342@btinternet.com) 01530 245373

**Secretary & Newsletter** Douglas Maas [doug@idnet.com](mailto:doug@idnet.com) 01530 242534

**Membership**

Linda Thompson [lingagthompson1958@gmail.com](mailto:lingagthompson1958@gmail.com) 01162387715

**Treasurer** Kim Turner 01530 244921

**Events** vacancy

**Web Master** Toby Manning [ptm@tobymanning.co.uk](mailto:ptm@tobymanning.co.uk)

## Foot Note

William Gimson was the brother of Josiah who founded the heavy engineering firm, and so was Ernest Gimson's uncle. It was William who founded the well-known Leicester timber merchant and it was William's son - William Jnr. - who later, in 1921, bought Swithland Wood on the Bradgate Estate and after clearing the mature timber by 1925, sold it on condition it must be available for public use forever.